THE WISDOM OF THE THRONE

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The Wisdom of the Throne

An Introduction to the Philosophy of Mulla Sadra

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In Memory of
Henry Corbin

and in gratitude
to all those who helped to make it real

سخن عشق نه آنست که آید بزبان

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It was not unusual, in the ornate rhetoric of later Persian and Arabic writing, for someone to be honored as "the Plato of his time" (*Aflāṭūn zamānih*). This book will have succeeded in its purpose if its reader comes away with an appreciation of the ways in which that epithet, with regard to Mulla Sadra, is anything but hyperbole. All the aspects of this work—the translation, the Introduction, and the notes—have been designed to make Sadra's philosophy as accessible as possible to those modern readers, whether from East or West, who are unfamiliar with the forms and intentions of the traditions within which he was writing. However, the true difficulty and deeper challenge of Sadra's philosophy does not lie in the unfamiliarity of its outward expression. There is a more essential sort of preparation, which he describes at some length in his Concluding Testament to *The Wisdom of the Throne*. In that respect, the best way to begin this book is at the very end. What he mentions there is indispensable.

The following acknowledgments are of necessity limited to the more public and professional forms of assistance that have contributed to this work. There is no adequate way to indicate here my gratitude for the profound inspiration and continual love and support of all those friends for whom the dedication is particularly intended. I hope they will recognize the full poignancy of Hafez' words in that respect.

This book is in many ways the outgrowth of two years' residence in Iran, from 1975 through 1977, and of the unforgettable welcome extended by Iranians (of many nationalities) during that time. The initial inspiration and support for this project came from J. Ashtiyani, H. Corbin, T. Izutsu, D. Shayegan, and H. Ziai. I am especially indebted to the staff members of the following institutions (whose directors at that time are listed in parentheses) for their essential services: the Iranian Centre for the Study of Civilizations (D. Shayegan); Iranian Academy of Philosophy (S. H. Nasr and H. Sharifi); McGill University Tehran Branch (M. Mohaghegh);

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In earlier drafts, this study benefitted considerably from readings and suggestions by M. Ayyoub, M. Case, D. Crow, K. Ernst, W. Hanaway, H. Landolt, J. Needleman, F. Rahman, K. Reinhart, and M. DeAngelis.

Finally, none of this would have been possible without the constant support and encouragement of my wife over the many years of preparation.

The edition on which this translation of *The Wisdom of the Throne* is based is that of G. Ahani, *'Arshīya* (Isfahan, 1341 H.S./1962), pp. 218-288; the corresponding pages of the Arabic text are given in square brackets within the translation. Minor corrections of Āhānī's text and variants have been made at a few points, based on literally corresponding sections of the *Asfār* or the commentary by Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī, *Sharḥ Kitāb al-Ḥikma al-'Arshīya* (Tabriz litho. edition, 1278/1861). It should be noted that the original Arabic has no paragraphs (beyond the chapter divisions or "Principles"), no capitalization, and no punctuation like that to which we are accustomed in English; those elements are the translator's addition. Material given in parentheses is also the translator's addi-

tion, either in uncontroversial explanation of the meaning of an Arabic word or phrase, or sometimes in more problematical commentary, where the literal phrase is not fully intelligible by itself.

The system of Arabic transliteration followed is, with minor variations, that of the Library of Congress. English versions, without diacritical markings, have been adopted wherever sanctioned by the dictionary ("Shiite," "Koran," etc.) and in the case of proper names of a few individuals (Mulla Sadra, Ibn Arabi, Suhrawardi, etc.) who, although perhaps not as well known as "Averroes" and "Avicenna," are at least as deserving of entering into educated philosophic discourse. The full transliterated versions are given in the Bibliography.

I would like to thank Mohammed Mikail for the calligraphy at the front of the book. In conclusion, a special note of thanks is due to my editor, Margaret Case, for her continuous support and attention on carrying this work through to completion.

Cambridge, Massachusetts
May 1980

INTRODUCTION

اللهم ارنا الاشيا كما هی

O God, cause us to see things as they really are!

Prophetic tradition, quoted
in Concluding Testament of
The Wisdom of the Throne

والكامل المحقق من له عين صحيحة لها مجمع النورين
فلا يعطل بصيرته عن ادراك النشئتين فيعرف سر العالمين

The complete and realized man is the one who possesses a truly seeing eye, one in which the two lights [of material and incorporeal being] are conjoined, so that he never keeps his inner vision from perceiving the two states of being: then he will truly know the secret of the two worlds.

Mulla Sadra, *al-Shawāhid*
al-Rubūbīya, p. 196

CHAPTER I

The Unity of Sadra's Work

Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Shīrāzī (d. 1050/1641), better known as Mulla Sadra, was one of the most profoundly original and influential thinkers in the history of Islamic philosophy. A number of recent studies are witness to the continuing vitality and intrinsic interest of his thought; at the same time, the remarkable diversity of these interpretations points to the difficult, many-sided nature of his work.[1] That difficulty has to do partly with the inherent complexity of the several highly developed intellectual traditions, largely unfamiliar to modern readers (even in the Islamic world), which are integrated in his writing;[2] partly with his use of styles of writing and levels of meaning directed toward very different audiences;[3] and partly with the intrinsic challenge of a philosophic perspective that transcends commonly accepted—perhaps even "natural"—categories and ways of thinking.[4]

Overcoming these obstacles to the comprehension of Sadra's writings requires an orientation that is both historical and philosophic. It is necessary, of course, to outline the historical context of Sadra's

[1] Among the more accessible recent studies, the following are representative of some of the major lines of interpretation: H. Corbin, *En Islam iranien*, IV, 54-122; S. H. Nasr, *Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī and His Transcendent Theosophy*; F. Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā*; and T. Izutsu and M. Mohaghegh, trs., *The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī*. The relative emphasis of these studies is, respectively, on the influence and approaches of esoteric Shiite tradition; Ibn Arabi and speculative Sufism (*'irfān naẓarī*); Avicenna and kalam; and the later Iranian scholastic elaboration of Sadra's work. The way in which each of these interpretations is a natural and understandable reading of Sadra's philosophy will become clearer in light of the historical discussions in Chapter III.

[2] See Chapter III, especially A-C.

[3] See Chapter III, C-E, and all of Chapter IV, along with the illustrations of this point in Chapters V and VI.

[4] This crucial question of the indispensable, yet highly problematic, experiential premises underlying Sadra's reflections on the reality of transcendence is discussed from different angles in Chapters II, III-E, IV-C, and throughout Chapters V and VI.

work corresponding to the background and understanding that he could have assumed in the different audiences for which he was actually writing. But that sort of information does not by itself reveal a unity of form or intention. On the contrary, looking at his work simply in terms of its historical sources and precedents leads to a variety of conflicting interpretations, each of which must exclude or minimize the alternative perspectives: that sort of misunderstanding seems to have arisen already in Sadra's own time.[5] The primary intention of this introduction, therefore, is to clarify the unifying philosophical context of Sadra's reflection—that is, the universal problem, manifested in his particular historical situation, that informs every aspect of his creative reworking of earlier intellectual traditions. That philosophic context corresponds to the actual oral teaching and study of these texts—not because it involves some secret doctrine, but because the problem in question is inevitably manifested quite differently in each reader's experience, according to his specific capacity and insight.[6]

Since the paradoxes of transcendence and the practical dilemmas to which that experience gives rise are accessible in some form to every reader, we have taken those phenomena as our starting point. Chapter II outlines the most general features of that complex problem and identifies the more public, theoretical dimensions that are the immediate focus of Sadra's attention. Chapter III discusses the ways in which that problem was manifested in Sadra's own historical situation and the broad outlines of his creative response. Chapter IV examines the forms and intentions of his various writings and the place of *The Wisdom of the Throne* within that larger corpus. Finally, the last two chapters offer a guided reading of that many-faceted cosmic journey which is the basic metaphor underlying all of Sadra's comprehensive works. While these remarks are no substitute for reflection on the actual text, they should be helpful in indicating some of the levels of understanding and intention unifying

[5] See Chapter IV-F on Sadra's posterity, and the different interpretations mentioned in n. 1 above.

[6] Chapter II outlines the essential features of the universal situation that constitutes the philosophic context of all of Sadra's writing. That context is assumed throughout the rest of the Introduction, but Chapters III-E, IV-C, V-A, and all of Chapter VI are especially important illustrations of the point made here.

Sadra's seemingly disparate discussions of ontology and theology, epistemology and eschatology.

This study, it should be stressed, is intended as an introduction to all of Mulla Sadra's works, and to his "philosophy" in the full sense of that thoroughly ambiguous term: as he repeatedly indicates, that "wisdom of the Throne" which is the object of this journey is itself not to be found in this or any other book. The work of that title is translated here, simply as an illustration, because of its unique combination of brevity and comprehensiveness and its relative accessibility for the nonspecialist reader.[7]

[7] For all of these distinctive features of *The Wisdom of the Throne*, see Sadra's own remarks in the Prologue, and our discussions of the place of that work in relation to Sadra's other writings in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER II

The Philosophic Context: Transcendence and Realization

A central unifying metaphor of Sadra's comprehensive writings is the Path of enlightenment—the spiritual journey from transcendence viewed as a problematic symbol or concept, to its perception as a personal experience or event, to its full realization as the context and reality underlying all experience.[8] The fundamental problem of Sadra's philosophy is that *reflection* which continually arises, at every point along this continuum of realization, out of the conflicts and confusions between the apparent demands and implications of transcendence (whether perceived as concept, experience, or reality) and the accepted norms of knowledge, belief, and right action within the larger community. More specifically, Sadra's writings focus on the public, most widely influential symbols of transcendence and on the most comprehensive theoretical rationales of belief and action within his own community, those which had widespread sociopolitical implications in that setting. The first part of this chapter sketches the most general outlines of that universal philosophic problem.

In a way, then, this is a form of philosophy that begins where the disciplines and literatures of practical spirituality (in Sadra's case, what could very loosely be termed Sufism and esoteric Shiism) ordinarily leave off. Yet that distinction, while real, always remains extremely problematic: this sort of reflection is not theoretical in the sense of culminating in some final self-sufficient system of meta-

[8] All of these terms have numerous technical equivalents (drawn from several philosophical and mystical traditions) in Sadra's philosophic lexicon; some of those will be discussed in Chapters V and VI. It is important not to let his often unfamiliar or exotic terminology obscure the realities to which those terms refer. The functions of Sadra's conceptual distinctions and technical language—like those of any tradition dealing with his subject—will become clear in light of the experience they seek to clarify. But one cannot easily approach that experience through these words: that initial approach usually requires a very different sort of rhetoric.

physical truth or belief. Instead, the theoretical consideration of these issues at the symbolic and self-consciously conceptual level always presupposes the most intimate and ongoing connection with the living experience (both of transcendence and of the other forms of knowledge in question) and with the real conflicts and uncertainties emerging from that experience. Translating the often unfamiliar theological and metaphysical language that is the formal expression of Sadra's thought back into appropriate experiential terms therefore requires considerable personal engagement and sympathy. For that reason, his works are intentionally constructed so that they will yield different meanings according to each reader's state of preparation and degree of active reflection and participation.[9]

The constant dialectical interplay of experience and understanding that is at the heart of Sadra's philosophy is summarized in what he calls the necessity of *taḥqīq*: that verification of the symbolic and conceptual expression of the Truth *(al-ḥaqq)* which is inseparable from its immediate realization in experience. In practice, this relationship means that the problem of transcendence will always be perceived in radically different ways, according to each individual's capacities and situation—and that the philosopher dealing with this question must write with those realities in mind. The second part of this chapter suggests some of the complex implications of this dimension of realization.

To summarize, these preliminary considerations indicate that the philosophic problem that is the center of Sadra's reflection is a truly universal one, at once intensely personal and inescapably political; and that the comprehensive wisdom or insight toward which that philosophy aims can only be expressed, whether in private or in more public contexts, as a sort of art appropriate to the particular given situation. It does not lead to any single explicit formula for right action or belief, to any final answer or "knowledge" that can be taught. And it does not replace those problematic religious symbols with which it begins: the task of interpretation—what Sadra calls *ta'wīl*, the "returning" of these symbols to their Source—is inseparable from our condition.

[9] See Chapter III-E on Sadra's "esotericism," Chapter IV-C, and the many illustrations of this essential point in the discussions in Chapters V and VI and in *The Wisdom of the Throne* itself.

A. The Problem of Transcendence

The starting point of Sadra's philosophy, as we have just mentioned, is the experience—and question—of the "transcendence" or "incorporeality" of soul (*tajarrud al-nafs*), the ultimate noetic union of the experiencing Self and Being. He describes this reality in terms of the traditional vocabulary of Sufism (enlightenment, unveiling, witnessing, and so on), refers to it through a multitude of Koranic expressions, and attempts to analyze its ontological structure with a battery of philosophic concepts, both original and borrowed. But essentially, he assumes that the object of all these references is at least somewhat evident to the properly prepared reader: his primary concern, at least in the philosophic writings, is with clearly understanding the reality and larger implications of that condition of being, not with the initial awakening or refinement of that awareness.[10]

What is indispensable to begin with, therefore, is an orientation that can clarify the general type of phenomenon that underlies Sadra's symbolic allusions and theoretical reflections. Although this preparation is far easier to ensure in the private oral teaching of texts such as this (that is, the context for which they were primarily written), it can at least be suggested in writing, mainly because the mode of experience in question stands in such dramatic contrast to our ordinary, everyday perception of the world as to be quite unforgettable. The reality Sadra is concerned with cannot be indicated simply by referring to the circumstances, outward occasions, or explanations of those distinctive moments of vision, although the natural attachment to those factors is a key source of the dilemmas that concern him. The event in question may have occurred anywhere: in the contemplation of a work of art; a moment of creative inspiration, or of union with nature; in a religious or contemplative setting; and so on. What is essential in this context is the underlying form.

As an approximation to what Sadra means by "transcendence," then, one can consider the following characteristics:[11] a condition of

[10] His writings contain sufficient allusions to the disciplines and preconditions of that other work. In *The Wisdom of the Throne*, see most notably the Concluding Testament and Chapter II-C, especially §§4, 5, and 8.

[11] The following list consists basically of English paraphrases—which could

intrinsic finality, completion, fulfillment, and inner peace (compatible with the most intense activity); a unique sense of unity, wholeness, and communion (with no ultimate separation of subject and object); a distinctive suspension (or warping or extension) of our usual perceptions of time and space; where nature is involved, a vision of all being as essentially alive (in a way quite different from our usual distinction of animate and inanimate entities); a sense of profound inner freedom and liberation (or negatively stated, the absence of anxiety, guilt, regret); a perception of universal, nonjudgmental love or compassion, extending to all beings; a paradoxical sense of "ek-stasis," of standing beyond and encompassing the ongoing flow of particular events (including the actions of one's "own" body). The list could be extended indefinitely. However, the qualities cited should have been sufficient to evoke some corresponding experiences; they may also have suggested appropriate literary or artistic illustrations.

If so, even a moment's reflection on those experiences and the contrast of that condition with our more usual perceptions should be sufficient to reveal the essential features of this problem of transcendence. First, on the level of understanding, of language and conceptualization, there is the *paradoxical distance* between these two conditions or perspectives—the fact that ordinary, prosaic language (including hyperbole) inevitably falls short of describing the actual reality of the experience of transcendence, so that we are often forced into negations (or even double negations) to avoid misstatements; while on the other hand, symbols and statements appropriate to that condition either sound incredible and hyperbolic, or else are subject to all sorts of gross and seemingly unavoidable misunderstandings. And second, on the immediate experiential level, there is the directed tension between these two states of being—not merely the curious, puzzling contrast between two equivalent reali-

of course be indefinitely expanded—of some of Sadra's key philosophic concepts: the Union of knower and known, Being as divine Mercy or Compassion, the transubstantiation of Being, and so on (the interrelations of some of those concepts are given in summary form in Chapter V). Again, what is indispensable at this point is the actual underlying experience, which each reader must supply for himself. With it, the meaning and function of Sadra's concepts will appear quite plainly; without it, his discussions will inevitably appear either confusing, disjointed and atomistic, or simply meaningless.

ties, but the unavoidable comparison and the inherent certainty of greater truth, reality, value, and perfection in the one instance. This directionality and this distance constitute the "path" and the motivation underlying Sadra's philosophy. They are something assumed, not argued for, and their manifestations will necessarily differ with every reader.

To continue for a moment with the particular experiences of transcendence evoked above, it should be evident that we all have certain explanations for them, certain ways of fitting them into the larger social framework (or more rarely, of creatively transforming it) and of coping with the undeniable disruptions and tensions, whether positive or negative, that such experiences bring into our lives. It should also be obvious that these complex explanatory frameworks do shift over time, both at the individual level and in larger social orders. These comprehensive sets of governing assumptions and rationales—only the smallest part of which reach self-conscious theoretical formulation in most cases—constitute what we could call an implicit paradigm or logic of transcendence. The way that spiritual guides and "physicians of the soul" operate on those paradigms at the level of the individual can be learned from the appropriate writings and from those versed in such matters.

In contrast, Sadra's philosophy, as we have indicated, begins on a far more comprehensive and public plane, with the abstract theoretical expressions of those conflicting theologies that together constituted the prevailing "logic of transcendence" within his own community. The philosophic task, at that level, requires a comprehensive vision of the "journey" as a process and reality ultimately including all of humanity. This awareness of the larger scope of the philosopher-statesman's responsibility—or in religious language, the role of the prophets and their interpreters, the imams—as guide (if not necessarily the visible ruler) of the larger community had deep roots in several of the traditions within which Sadra was working.[12]

[12] Some of those assumptions concerning the relations of philosophy and religion, and of the philosopher, prophet, and imam, as they relate to Sadra's own philosophic intentions, are outlined in Chapters III (A-E) and IV (B-C). The discussions in Chapters V-VI are all concerned with the way in which that dimension of Sadra's work is related to his more technical metaphysical inquiries and to the specific structure of *The Wisdom of the Throne.*

The specific historical elements and setting of his philosophic activity are explained in the following chapter. Before going on to that, however, it is important to grasp the universality of the situation that gives rise to reflection at this more public level and the peculiar nature and limits of a philosophy that is centered on the question of transcendence.

From a certain perspective, Sadra's philosophy—and its analogues in other civilizations—can appear as a purely theoretical effort, as the construction of a sort of "metalanguage" capable of reconciling the conflicting claims of a variety of "logics" of transcendence (in the form of theologies, political and social ideologies, more or less articulate metaphysical systems, and so on). But followed in isolation, this approach leads to still another conflicting point of view, compounding the confusion it was intended to resolve and culminating in the sterile logical and aesthetic refinement of concepts further and further removed from the underlying realities. On the other hand, it is equally true that the resolution or proper perception of these theoretical issues can only proceed through a continually renewed return to the actual experience of transcendence or Being,[13] which is the common ground of all intelligibility and understanding, since it is precisely the natural attachment to a limited point of view (conception, image, symbol) of that reality that generates the original conflict and confusion. Both of these moments are integral and indispensable aspects of what Sadra calls the process of "realization." It should already be evident that philosophy, understood as this interplay of experience and understanding, is not something that ever stops or comes to an end.[14] The last part of this chapter explores some further implications of this dimension of realization.

[13] See Chapter IV, B-C, for the fundamental role of this "Return" *(al-ma'ād)* in the formal structure of Sadra's writing, and Chapters V-A and VI for some of its meanings in *The Wisdom of the Throne.*

[14] In Sadra's philosophic language, this inherent and truly universal movement of realization is the human manifestation of the "transubstantiation" *(ḥaraka jawharīya*: cf. Chapter V-B and all of VI) of all Being—or in this case, the soul's intrinsic tendency toward deeper self-knowledge and ultimately the enlightened awareness of its essential noetic reality *(ma'rifat al-nafs*: cf. Chapter VI-A).

B. The Dimension of Realization

One of Sadra's favorite metaphors for the problem of transcendence, as we have already mentioned, is the image of the Path, the trans-historical continuum (or situation) of enlightenment or perfection, which can be perceived and described from many perspectives.[15] From the point of view of the realization of transcendence, one unavoidable philosophic and practical difficulty is that in this domain the balance of experience and understanding in each individual (at a given moment) is quite different; nor is it something that can be simply or easily changed. At the "beginning," for example, the crucial problem may be simply getting started, becoming aware of the very possibility of transcendence and the larger prospects that initial discovery reveals. In the "middle," the danger is of stopping short, of failing to grasp the full universal dimensions and demands of this movement. Concretely, that failure is manifested in the many forms of gnostic sectarianism: in the twin illusions of a rejection of the common material and social world (whether that is expressed in a quietistic or antinomian direction), or the violent —and forever frustrated—attempt at its radical outward transformation (chiliasm, messianism, and their modern counterparts). A considerable part of Sadra's philosophic effort is directed toward these recurrent destructive temptations, whether on the individual or the wider societal levels, which flow from the perception (perhaps unavoidable at a certain stage) of the transcendent mode of reality as a revelation somehow unique and completely separate from the familiar order of the "unenlightened" world. And finally, from the standpoint of the "end," there is the continuing challenge of viewing this journey as a whole—of "seeing with both lights," as it is expressed in our epigraph—and of acting and speaking appropriately to that situation.

15 It is impossible here to enter into the complexities of the historical development of this image in earlier Islamic writers, or to deal with the philosophic adaptation of those traditions in Sadra's own work (for example, in the Concluding Testament here). For some details of its usage in the title and structure of the *Asfār*, see Nasr, *Ṣadr al-Dīn*, pp. 58-67. However, with respect to the universal situation alluded to here, the most essential aspect of Sadra's use of this theme is in the cycle of the "Origin" of Being and man's "Return" to the realization of that noetic condition, which constitutes the basic structure of all his systematic writings: cf. Chapters IV, B-C, and all of V and VI.

Given that the relationship of experience and understanding in this realm is so radically different for each individual, the basic dilemma of the philosopher (or the "guide," however conceived) is finding, in each instance, the proper balance between the possibilities for awakening a deeper awareness of the reality of transcendence, with the prospects and further demands that implies, and the very real dangers and misunderstandings to which that effort can also give rise. If balancing and integrating those demands is difficult internally and at the level of individual discourse and relationship, it is vastly more complex and ambiguous in the case of public and written expressions. How Mulla Sadra responded to the demands of that situation should become clearer in the following chapters.

CHAPTER III

The Historical Context

The purpose of this chapter is to give the basic historical background required to understand Sadra's work as he himself saw it—that is, as one response to the universal situation outlined in the preceding chapter. Sadra's essential self-image, reflected in all of his writings, mirrors his conception of the role of the prophet and imam.[16] His life and work are accordingly conceived in terms of that archetypal model: it assumes a certain dramatic setting, actors and speeches, audiences, and an appropriate language and rhetoric. The different sections of this chapter take up the particular historical forms of each of these aspects of Sadra's work.

Since the historical context of Sadra's writing is extremely complex and unfamiliar to many readers today, it is important to keep in mind that his understanding of his role and philosophic situation is quite self-consciously archetypal and trans-historical: in his understanding, who we really are—however unaware of this we may often be—*is* the "imam" (under whatever name),[17] and philosophy, in the broadest sense, is the realization of this universal dimension of our being, with all the responsibilities that implies. At the same time, this movement of realization does not involve any departure from the conflicts and uncertainties of the unique individual and histori-

[16] In this Introduction, we have used capitals where the reference is primarily to Muhammad and the twelve historical Imams traditionally accepted by the form of Shiism officially accepted in Iran in Sadra's time; the lower case (imam, etc.) is used for all manifestations of the same metaphysical Reality (*ḥaqīqa*). Sadra's understanding of the relations between these different meanings of these crucial terms will become clearer in the following chapters. In a way, his whole philosophy is devoted to clarifying that relation.

[17] *The Wisdom of the Throne* uses a multitude of terms to express the fundamental contrast alluded to here: see Chapter V-A and especially n. 65 below. Perhaps the most basic of these are the pairs *insān/bashar* ("human being"/"human animal"), *ma'rifa/'ilm* ("true knowing"/"formal knowledge"), and *īmān/islām* ("true inner faith"/"outward submission").

cal situation: that transient scene is precisely what manifests the Form or intelligible Reality (*ḥaqīqa*) of man.

The paradoxical simultaneity—and tension—of noetic Form and temporal manifestation (*maẓhar*) is the central subject of Sadra's ontology.[18] What it actually refers to can perhaps be seen most clearly, in *The Wisdom of the Throne*, in his use of scriptural interpretation (*ta'wīl*): for Sadra, the true philosophic understanding of the scripture or prophetic saying does not negate or supersede its first historical sense; it only reveals the deeper insight and intention underlying that first usage, the intelligible reality that is embodied again and again in the actual historical and personal situation. This chapter should help to convey Sadra's perception, in the light of this awareness, of his own historical position and the basic outlines of his philosophic response.

A. Sadra's Life: The Drama and Setting

Sadra lived from approximately 980/1571 to 1050/1640.[19] His life, so far as we know, was mainly devoted to the study and teaching of philosophy and theology—although "study" in his case definitely included the more practical spiritual disciplines as well. His adult years largely corresponded to the reign of Shah 'Abbās I (d. 1038/1629), the culminating period in the establishment of Twelve-Imam Shiism as the state religion (or official school of Islamic law) in Safavid Iran. The more immediate practical aims of his writing have much to do with the conflicts and novel opportunities created by that recent accession of Shiism as the official form of religion, although they also have much deeper roots in Iranian and Islamic history. But before turning to that wider public setting of Sadra's

[18] In *The Wisdom of the Throne*, see Part II-C, §11, and Part I, §§7-11, as well as the discussions of this point in Chapters V-B and VI-B.

[19] For additional biographical information, see Nasr, *Ṣadr al-Dīn*, pp. 31-39. Most of the scanty biographical data given here and in other studies of Mulla Sadra is based on his own remarks in the introduction to the *Asfār* and other works. There is also a considerable amount of anecdotal material reflecting his subsequent historical image (for example, in relation to his teacher, Mīr Dāmād), but such accounts are usually apocryphal. Chapter III-F also contains some details relevant to Sadra's historical setting and immediate posterity.

work, it is necessary to outline the personal side of his spiritual and intellectual development.

Sadra's own spiritual pilgrimage, as he describes it in the preface to his magnum opus, *al-Asfār al-Arbaʿa* (The Four Journeys), falls into three major periods, corresponding in their inner significance to a similar division in the life of the Prophet. Outwardly, the opening period was devoted first to the traditional religious and philological curriculum, then to the intensive study of the Avicennan philosophic tradition, which he pursued in the Safavid capital of Isfahan under the most respected masters of his time.[20] At the same time, he was also attracted toward a body of more Neoplatonic writings (especially the works of Ibn Arabi, Suhrawardi, and their commentators) traditionally associated with the methods and insights of Sufism. Eventually—whether because of his interest in these popularly suspect writers or, as other sources suggest, because of his rash public espousal of these writers and open attacks on the mass of literal-minded clergy and legal scholars (the Shiite *ʿulamā'* and *fuqahā'*)—he was forced to flee Isfahan. The next period, about which we have few factual details, was one of withdrawal from public intellectual life and devotion to contemplation, spiritual exercises, and deeper reflection on his earlier studies. Finally, apparently at a fairly late point in his life, Sadra returned to an active teaching position in his native Shiraz. Virtually all of his writings, including *The Wisdom of the Throne*, date from this final period of his life.[21]

The analogy with the life of the Prophet, however, does not concern the particular details of these external events; it has to do

[20] For more information concerning Sadra's own teachers and immediate intellectual milieu, see Nasr, *Ṣadr al-Dīn*, pp. 19-38, and Nasr's article on "The School of Ispahan" in M. M. Sharif, ed., *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, II, 904-932.

[21] For Sadra's writings and their general interrelations, see Chapter IV. It appears that the *Asfār* and all of Sadra's other major works (at least in their present form) were written after he was almost sixty years old. This dating, along with the date of his birth, is based on a marginal comment in a copy of an autograph version of the *Asfār*, in which Sadra writes that the inspiration concerning the ontic "Union of Being and consciousness"—a principle whose fundamental importance in his thought is discussed throughout Chapters V and VI—occurred to him when he was fifty-eight (lunar) years of age, in 1036/1628. See the translation of this important passage in Corbin's introduction to Sadra's *Kitāb al-Mashā'ir*, pp. 2 and 21, and in Nasr, *Ṣadr al-Dīn*, p. 31.

with the natural spiritual and philosophic progression they reflect, the cycle of realization described in the last chapter. That movement begins with the inner condition of unconscious "belief," with the accepted forms of knowledge and behavior derived from (and largely appropriate to) man's physical and social existence.[22] The first experience of transcendence brings a sort of problematic disequilibrium into that mode of being, a disturbance that can lead initially to all sorts of intellectual confusions and dangerous practical temptations. The second stage, which may involve a temporary withdrawal from the larger social world, is one of the simultaneous inner deepening of that experience of enlightenment (moving from a passing "state" to a lasting "station," in the language of the Sufis) and the full intellectual integration of its practical and theoretical implications. Finally, this process of realization culminates in a return to a conscious activity of guidance in the larger community, with both a heightened awareness of the universality of the problem of transcendence and a more realistic sense of the actual possibilities for effective speech and action. All of Sadra's writings reflect an elaborate awareness of this progression, both in their formal structure and in their different levels of meaning:[23] their intention is to lead each reader to the highest understanding of the prophet appropriate to his state of realization.

Now at this last stage the distinction between imam, or guide and interpreter, and prophet is simply one of perspective or degree.[24] Formally, the imam is the interpreter of the symbols and

[22] "Belief" (*i'tiqād*; also *'ilm*, *islām*, etc.) is understood here in direct contrast to the condition of inner "knowing" (*ma'rifa*; *īmān*, *yaqīn*, etc.) or actual awareness of transcendence. This essential contrast, which Sadra describes in many different ways (cf. nn. 17, 65, and all of Chapter V-A), refers to the inner state of being or viewpoint of the experiencing "self"—not to any special "object" of knowledge or belief. The nature of this contrast, in a way the primary subject of all of Sadra's thought, is discussed further in Chapters V and VI below.

[23] See Chapters IV-B and VI-B for the overall structure of *The Wisdom of the Throne* and Sadra's other systematic writings. For the different levels of writing and intended meanings, see especially Chapters III-E; IV, B-C; and the illustrations in Chapters V and VI.

[24] See Chapter VI-B concerning some of the implications of this last stage of realization. As already mentioned (cf. nn. 16-17), Sadra is mainly concerned, in all of his writings, with the universal philosophic meaning of these roles, which ultimately concern essential dimensions of each person's being, in relation

normative principles revealed by the prophetic lawgiver or founder of a given historical community. But as Sadra indicates, the only true interpretation is the appropriate re-creation of the intelligible Reality and intention underlying the original symbol, in terms of present circumstances. The practical implications of the recognition of this situation are at the root of the continuing dispute with the larger body of more literal-minded Shiite clergy that is in the background of all of Sadra's works.

It is clear that Sadra saw the public institutionalization of a new Shiite religio-political order in his own day as one of those historically rare opportunities for directly affecting the guiding public interpretations and symbols of man's destiny—for restoring the intentions of the Prophet and an awareness of the centrality of the reality of transcendence not only at the level of the individual or small initiatic group, but also among those influential religious authorities who were widely assumed to be the guides of the larger community.[25] The hope for such an opportunity was common to Shiite movements throughout Islamic history (as still today), but the different theoretical interpretations of the Imamate, which could live in uneasy coexistence as long as Shiism remained a minority faith, had radically different implications when established in political authority. In Sadra's own time and in the immediately preceding generations, the interplay of Safavid political motivations and one influential line of Shiite ideology had resulted in, among other things, the systematic persecution of major Sufi orders, the exile (often to the more tolerant and spiritually diverse Moghul realm) of accomplished artists and spiritual leaders, and a widespread attitude of intolerance and suspicion toward much of the preceding (Sunni) Islamic cultural legacy, both religious and secular. The conception of Shiism primarily motivating (or at least

to himself and the larger communities (historical and trans-historical) within which he exists. The relation of those realities to what are popularly or unreflectively taken to be their paradigmatic historical manifestations is—as Sadra well understood—something that will necessarily appear to be different at successive stages of realization, and cannot in any real sense be taught or literally formulated.

25 For the nature and potential influence of Sadra's intended audiences, see Chapters III-D and E below; for a brief overview of his actual posterity, see III-F.

benefiting from) these actions was that of a comprehensive body of revealed law and tradition, implicitly containing detailed prescriptions for every area of belief and action, to be interpreted for the ignorant masses (the *muqallidūn*) by a small body of specially qualified legal scholars (the *mujtahids*).[26] Socially and politically, moreover, both this legalist Shiite movement and Sadra's reaction against it tended to intersect—albeit problematically—with a far more longstanding, deeply rooted tension in Iranian life: the traditional opposition of the powerful, formally educated religious officials (the *'ulamā'*) and the more popular representatives of an authentic inner spirituality (the *'urafa'*), a tendency that was often somewhat antinomian and socially disruptive in its outward expression.[27]

Against this background of conflict, Sadra's philosophy and larger vision, despite its obvious sympathies, cannot be simply identified with or reduced to a single position. His writings, as we have already mentioned, are primarily theoretical and are directed toward the elite among the small literate class of Shiite religious scholars. They aim at a transformation in the perspective of those influential authorities and guides of the Shiite community which alone could ultimately remove the underlying sources of the recurrent conflicts

[26] See n. 52 for further references concerning this strictly legalist "Uṣūlī" conception of Shiite Islam (as well as the opposing "Akhbārī" point of view). It should be emphasized that this tendency, although quite powerful and well entrenched in the educated clerical class, represented at all times only one dimension of the historical forms of Shiism, even within the Iranian Twelve-Imam Shiite setting. Other important strands included the many forms of popular Shiite piety, Shiite Sufi groups, Shiite philosophers, and a general reverence for Ali and his family even among those who might be legally Sunnis. All of these phenomena stood in a highly ambiguous relation to the special authority claimed by the narrowly legalist Shiite *'ulamā'*. Conflicts tended to arise at several levels, in Sadra's time as today, whenever those clerics attempted to extend their wider theoretical claims into actual domination of other spheres of life. Sadra's philosophy obviously strikes at the theoretical roots of their claim to unique authority; but its own relation to historical disputes concerning the interpretation or application of Shiite tradition remains difficult to determine. See Chapter III-F for some of its subsequent interpretations in the Iranian context.

[27] The opposition of the narrow-minded preacher (*vā'iẓ*) or hypocritical ascetic (*zāhid*) and the way of the enlightened *darvīsh* or *rind*, for example, is a classic typology in Persian poetry and folklore of many periods: individuals and larger social movements reflecting that tension could be cited from pre-Islamic times to the present day. For the subsequent relation of Sadra's works to these ongoing historical conflicts, see discussions and references in Chapter III-F.

we have just mentioned. His intentions, then, are truly radical—not in the sense of still another movement in the old self-perpetuating cycle of action and reaction, but as a careful pragmatic effort gradually to shift the guiding paradigms of his entire community.

That effort, as it is reflected in Sadra's writings, proceeds on two levels: there are the common religious symbols—in this case, the Koran and the sayings of the Prophet and Imams—that effectively attracted the formal allegiance of the entire community, despite obviously vast differences of understanding and interpretation; and there are the various abstract "theologies" (dogmatic, philosophic, and mystical) that claimed to provide the ultimate theoretical justification for those conflicting interpretations. Accordingly, Sadra's philosophy is directed first of all toward a real and lasting reconciliation of these different interpretive perspectives among the theoretical elite; but he also assumes the broader practical effects of this renewed understanding, over a longer time, through the instruction and example of those religious authorities in the larger community. Even on the more theoretical level, Sadra was well aware, the attainment of this sort of comprehensive, harmonizing understanding of the symbols of transcendence required considerably more than a conceptual synthesis of the conflicting theologies; there had already been a long history of such attempts. In order to be meaningful and lastingly effective, therefore, the conceptual reconciliation of those interpretive traditions had to be presented in a way that would lead readers from each tradition (and with very different degrees of inner preparedness) toward a more complete awareness of the reality of transcendence; and at the same time direct each reader's reflection toward the valid concerns and considerations underlying the apparently opposing points of view. These two complementary aspects of Sadra's philosophy, as we have already emphasized, will inevitably appear quite different according to the reader's particular capacities and point of departure.[28] The next section sketches some of the most relevant aspects of the major theoretical traditions which are the background of Sadra's response.

[28] Some of the special features of Sadra's style of writing, as it was adapted to these purposes are outlined in Chapter III-E below; they are illustrated at length throughout *The Wisdom of the Throne*.

B. The Intellectual Background

One of the most important features of Sadra's treatment of the intellectual traditions with which he worked is his radical selectivity, his consistent focus on the problem of transcendence and the issues and imperatives flowing from that focus. This concentration is most apparent in his choice of Koranic symbols and Prophetic sayings, which are almost entirely drawn from Sufi traditions of interpretation, and in his selection of sayings of the Shiite Imams, which is mainly restricted to the more mystical, esoteric teachings of Ali and Ja'far al-Ṣādiq.[29] Sadra's exclusive devotion to this metaphysical, outwardly theoretical aspect of religion, together with his almost complete silence concerning particular ritual or legal prescriptions and the accepted structure of legal interpretation of the Koran and Tradition, are crucial aspects of his writing that together lend themselves to a variety of interpretations.[30] They pose difficulties that no thoughtful reader could easily ignore.

These sorts of problematic exclusions and concentrations are even more severe in Sadra's selection among the three or four intellectual traditions that make up the formal background of his metaphysical

[29] Sadra's understanding and use of the Koran and Prophetic traditions is largely based on the Sufi interpretations summarized in the works of Ibn Arabi (cf. Chapter III-B and C below). His choice and treatment of Shiite traditions, in contrast, has relatively fewer immediate historical precedents (although it is much closer to certain earlier Ismaili Shiite views), and seems based on a more direct, creative reflection on those materials. In any case, the true coincidence of those two bodies of tradition, as Sadra understands it, has to do not simply with their common historical background in the Koranic revelation (although that is obviously assumed), but above all with the immediately accessible universal realities to which both point. The uses and meanings of tradition and belief (in the most extended sense) appear very different when viewed from that philosophic perspective: cf. Chapter VI-B.

[30] The significance of this silence in Sadra's work is most obvious when it is viewed against a long line of Sunni Sufi apologetic writings (of which Ghazali's massive *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* is probably the most famous illustration) that had attempted to show how the path of realization depended on strict adherence to and internalization of a specific (although very extensive) set of particular ritual forms and prescriptions. Some of Ibn Arabi's writings reflect a similar tendency, at least to some extent. Sadra's remarkable silence in this regard, together with his open and vociferous attacks on the legalist assumptions of the Shiite *'ulamā'*, clearly pose a problem of interpretation that no critical reader could ignore. However, they do not offer easy or unambiguous answers: cf. Chapter VI-B.

writings (including *The Wisdom of the Throne*): kalam theology, Avicennan metaphysics, the Neoplatonic ontology of Ibn Arabi's school, and Suhrawardi's Illuminationist philosophy.[31] The first three of these disciplines, at least, represented far more complex and widely influential intellectual and social traditions, as well as potentially conflicting practical methods and aims. Sadra could assume that his readers, whatever their own background, would be aware of those broader underlying issues and commitments; often those traditions were combined or competed for influence within a single individual.[32] Sadra's relative silence in regard to those connections forces each reader to undertake his own independent reconsideration of the relations of method and intention within and among these traditions. The following summaries are concerned mainly with those larger connections of the theoretical traditions in question, factors that are most often only implicit in the theoretical discussions in *The Wisdom of the Throne*.[33]

1. *Kalam theology.* The discipline of *'ilm al-kalām* was one of the most original intellectual developments in Islamic civilization; despite obvious similarities to Christian theological traditions in language and subject matter, its general role in relation to the larger body of Islamic religious sciences was quite different from the function of theology in the West. Two points are especially crucial for understanding Sadra's position vis-à-vis this tradition. First, by Sadra's time the theological vocabulary and formal structure of this discipline (questions of divine Attributes, Essence, creation, prophecy, and so on) had been adopted to some extent by each of the other traditions—Avicennan philosophy and the schools of Ibn Arabi, Suhrawardi, and other speculative Sufi writers—to express their own insights, methods, and intentions, which differed radically

[31] See the discussions of these traditions immediately below (Chapters III-B and C), as well as more detailed historical references in the appropriate notes to the translation.

[32] That is one reason why the question of Sadra's actual audiences will be discussed separately, in Chapter III-D.

[33] Explanations of specific questions of vocabulary and interpretation, as well as general references concerning these traditions, are given in the notes to the translation.

from those of the strict kalam theologians (the *mutakallimūn*).[34] Thinkers within each of these non-kalam traditions had developed an elaborate theological expression of their own in an effort to relate their concerns more effectively to the guiding symbols and beliefs of the larger Islamic community. These underlying differences in substance and method were apparent to all those concerned at the time, although the overlapping vocabulary tends to obscure those fundamental differences for modern readers.[35]

Secondly, the discipline of kalam, strictly conceived, developed in direct connection with the primary concern of the much larger body of Muslim religious scholars (including Shiite ones), which was the elaboration of the religious Law (the *sharī'a*) and the body of tradition and interpretative structures connected with it. Kalam was taught in the religious schools, and was usually studied by students already trained in the basic assumptions of the traditional legal disciplines. Its premises and procedures reflected the level of understanding (or religious belief) of that class, and the schools of kalam—underneath their obvious formal and practical disagreements—did share the unifying implicit assumption that divine revelation (whether in its Koranic or earlier forms) was manifested in the articulation of a specific and detailed religious Law, providing an explicit divine guide to right action and belief.

Sadra's own understanding of kalam, which closely followed the position of earlier Islamic philosophers, focuses on the more public sociopolitical functions of the kalam theological formulae as a dialectical defense of the necessary forms of popular belief and common ethical norms.

2. *Avicennan metaphysics.* The metaphysical writings of Avicenna (d. 428/1037), which had been extensively and creatively commented on for several centuries before Sadra's time, formed the theoretical apex of a much more extensive Islamic Aristotelean

[34] See the discussion of the interrelation of theological and philosophic concerns and forms of expression in *The Wisdom of the Throne* in Chapters V and VI.

[35] The situation is analogous to that in medieval Latin philosophy and theology, as also to philosophic discourse in certain modern communist countries where debate is formally limited to the Marxist scriptures.

philosophical tradition. That tradition, going back to the Hellenistic commentators (and paralleled in medieval Latin and Jewish philosophy), was based on the close study of virtually all the Aristotelean corpus, with a special focus on logic and the sciences of nature. Historically, it was often closely associated with the teaching and practice of Galenic medicine, as in the case of Avicenna himself. In terms of numbers of adherents, it was a small and elite tradition, most often taught privately—or if in a religious curriculum, reserved for a smaller group of advanced and specially interested students. By Sadra's time the creative activity in this tradition was largely concentrated in the area of metaphysics (*ilāhīyāt*), where, as we have just mentioned, the exploration of many classical philosophic questions was expressed in a theological vocabulary adopted from kalam. The creative efforts of such influential Shiite philosophers as Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274) and Sadra's own teacher Mīr Dāmād (d. 1041/1631) had succeeded in winning a certain relative acceptance of this tradition among at least the most educated Shiite religious scholars of that era.

A second and integral dimension of this tradition, going back to the creative reworking of Plato's political philosophy by Alfarabi (d. 339/950), was its focus on the problematic relations and functions of religion and philosophy: on the understanding of the roles of the prophetic lawgiver, the imam (the "leader" or interpreter of the Law), and the philosopher within a given religiopolitical community. Such central features of Sadra's work as his concentration on metaphysics and theology and his conception of the relation of religious and philosophical language (IV-B and C below) flow from the perspectives of that tradition—many of which, by Sadra's time, were widely assumed in some form among a much larger circle of educated readers who were not necessarily trained philosophers themselves. Some of those assumptions will be explored in more detail in the following sections (C-E). Here we will only summarize what were, for Sadra, the most essential positive features of the Avicennan philosophic tradition, and the way its metaphysics was related to a more comprehensive political and religious philosophy.

Sadra's fundamental point of agreement with the Avicennan philosophers has to do with the postulate of the ultimate intelligibility or stably ordered structure of the cosmos, and with a sense of man's

unique corresponding dignity as the knower or intelligence (*'aql*) potentially mirroring that order of being. Philosophy, in the primary and most universal sense, was conceived as man's inherent movement toward the fulfillment or perfection of that natural intellective end. At this point, none of these terms should be narrowly conceived. Sadra, as will become evident, strongly disagreed with his Avicennan predecessors concerning what he saw as their severely restricted conceptions of that order (especially their focus on physical being to the relative exclusion of psychic reality), of the methods leading to its complete or proper apprehension, and of the nature and full extent of that distinctly human "knowing." But the immense effort of reflection and close logical argument expressed in his writings should be sufficient evidence of his assumption of a common ground of communication underlying the shared process of philosophic inquiry. The extent of that effort also is a sign of his deep conviction that all the recurrent forms of theological and gnostic irrationalism represent what is essentially an incomplete stage in the process of realization, where the experience and understanding of transcendence are not yet sufficiently integrated.

This process of human perfection was not conceived naively or simplistically—that is, as reaching an end in time, or as a science that could be taught in literal or dogmatic fashion. On the contrary, the second basic point of agreement between Sadra and his philosophic predecessors had to do with the awareness of vastly differing individual capacities for realizing this end, and with the resulting necessity for responsible, appropriate teaching and action in accordance with those real and unavoidable differences. Again, the much greater scope of this process of realization, as Sadra conceives it, only increases the complexities of this situation.

Finally, Sadra and the earlier Islamic philosophers were also well aware that this universal dimension of man's nature as "knower," and the virtues or perfections appropriate to that potential, were only part of the human reality. There is also his existence as a particular social animal, living in a world of relative agreement or normative consensus grounded in beliefs and forms of behavior differing widely among individuals, not to mention the larger social wholes. Sadra recognized that the ethical and civic virtues grounded in this dimension of man's existence were by no means identical

with the perfection of his higher, universal nature (however conceived), although they might be necessary conditions for that perfection. And he also realized that in many circumstances there tended to be a real tension, even culminating in open violence, between the demands or apparent implications of these two orders of existence. Some archetypal examples of this, for Sadra and his readers, were the incomprehension and hostility encountered by the Prophet and the Imams and the gross popular misunderstandings of those paradoxes in which Sufis like al-Ḥallāj (martyred in 922) had expressed their experience of transcendence. Hence the role of the philosopher, prophet, and imam—both for Sadra and for earlier Islamic philosophers—had as a central task positively integrating and mediating these two dimensions of man's being, both in the community and the individual psyche, while always keeping in mind the ultimate end of realization. Sadra's focus on theology and metaphysics, in his reworking of Avicennan philosophy, reflects his full awareness of both sides of that task.

3. *Ibn Arabi and Sufism.* The writings of Ibn Arabi (d. 638/1240), which Mulla Sadra quotes extensively in all of his philosophical works, have basically a twofold function in his philosophy. On the theoretical level, Ibn Arabi's works (along with the extensive body of later commentaries on them) pose a number of crucial problems concerning any understanding of the experience of transcendence that are a central inspiration for Sadra's own thinking. At the same time, they also represent that immense body of disparate, often externally conflicting traditions, schools, and practices that may loosely be called "Sufism"—that is, the primary historical setting (if we include here the forms of esoteric Shiism) in which the problem of transcendence actually arose in Sadra's day. Both explicitly and implicitly, Sadra frequently refers his readers back to that setting for the indispensable realization and personal experience underlying his key concepts. But he does not give any explicit prescriptions as to how his own reflections on that experience should ultimately be related back to the reader's personal situation, even though the necessity of such a connection is always assumed.

In any case, the scope of Ibn Arabi's sources is so comprehensive and the range of his subsequent influence so vast that allusions to

his writings and technical vocabulary could not readily be identified with any single school or practical Sufi tendency. The vast number of interrelated Koranic terms and themes that Sadra uses to refer to the experience of transcendence, for example, were largely taken over from Ibn Arabi's works. But Ibn Arabi himself drew on the reflections and creative symbolizations of many earlier generations of Sufis; and his complex technical vocabulary, in turn, came to dominate subsequent literary expressions of the problems of transcendence in Islamic civilization, ranging from popular poetry to complex philosophic speculations. In their incomparable Persian poetic expressions, for example, these central themes in Sadra's work were familiar to virtually everyone in his community, not merely the small theoretical elite. It is no great exaggeration to say that all subsequent reflection on these issues in the Islamic setting—including Mulla Sadra's own work—necessarily appears as a sort of commentary on Ibn Arabi, whether for or against. What accounted for this massive influence was, among other things, the closeness of Ibn Arabi's own highly symbolic and complexly allusive vocabulary to the full ambiguities of the actual experience of transcendence, in its many forms.[36] On this level, Sadra was able to use Ibn Arabi's words as a vehicle pointing to the recurrent practical problems of preparation, technique, social organization, and ethical and political implications historically associated with the process of realization.

On the more intellectual level, the deep ambiguities of Ibn Arabi's work had given rise to a long tradition of commentaries attempting a more systematic conceptual formulation of his underlying point of view—whether that was judged positively or negatively—and a clarification of its more concrete implications. At this

[36] The typical style of Ibn Arabi's major works, which are quoted at several places in *The Wisdom of the Throne*, is one of constant apparent contradictions and extreme paradoxical leaps between the common meaning of an expression and direct allusions to the experience and perspective of transcendence. It is a rhetoric of excess and extremes that tries to trap or trip up the usual patterns of belief, and suddenly break through to the immediate experience underlying the Koranic symbolism. Ibn Arabi's works are largely directed to the level of individual transformation, and often represent the spontaneous creative use of symbols. Subsequent commentators then sought to coordinate those expressions in a comprehensive ontological system, and in the process often lost sight of their meaning and intention in the original contexts.

more theoretical stage, the main concerns and original contributions of Sadra's philosophy have their roots in controversies that had already clearly emerged within this tradition.[37] Specifically, Sadra was concerned with combatting two recurrent pitfalls in the interpretation of Ibn Arabi's (and all other) symbolic expressions for the reality of transcendence. The first of these was to reduce those often intentionally paradoxical symbols to logically absurd—and ethically dangerous—fallacies ("monism," "pantheism," etc.), by ignoring the essential tension between the condition of transcendence and our ordinary perception of reality, and simply considering those symbols according to the logic of this latter, unenlightened point of view. The second kind of recurrent misunderstanding—which for convenience we shall refer to here as the "gnostic" interpretation[38]—is the conception of the experience of transcendence as a kind of "knowledge" restricted to a particular symbolic form or initiatic situation, on the model of what we ordinarily consider knowledge or belief. This natural initial confusion between the specific form or circumstance in which the awareness of transcendence may arise, and the full, inconceivable universality of the underlying reality, is a dangerous and abortive short-circuiting of the ongoing process of realization: Sadra's philosophy is aimed at revealing the universal grounds of this temptation and its

[37] This background can be most clearly seen in N. Heer's translation of *The Precious Pearl* by the famous Persian poet Jāmī (d. 898/1492). That work summarizes almost all the basic issues discussed in Part I of *The Wisdom of the Throne* from the point of view of the kalam theologians, Avicennan philosophers, and Sufis (of Ibn Arabi's school), and then shows how the Sufi approach reaches the truth of the matter in each case. Comparing that book with *The Wisdom of the Throne* will also show the very important original features of Sadra's treatment of those questions, which have to do especially with the further realization (as well as the analytic clarification) of the insights Jāmī (and those he summarizes) had expressed.

[38] This particular usage is derived from Plotinus' similarly intense opposition to the gnostic and hermetic tendencies in his own time, despite the considerable outward resemblance between the expression of his philosophy and their formal "systems." In the larger sense intended here, a "gnostic" interpretation of the symbols of transcendence was often common to those with some actual experience (albeit improperly understood) and to a larger group of theologians without any experience of the reality in question, who nonetheless used superficially similar theological formulations to justify exclusivist notions of unique historical "revelations." See the discussion of Sadra's response to both these tendencies in Chapter V-B-3.

more public forms in his own day, since its individual manifestations are truly innumerable.

4. *Suhrawardi.* By Sadra's time, the philosophic writings of Suhrawardi (martyred in 587/1191, at the age of 38) do not seem to have attracted the same sort of separate following and complex social connections as the three disciplines we have just examined. Rather than forming the basis of an independent school, they were apparently another of the intellectual options facing the small elite of educated philosophers.[39] We mention Suhrawardi here because his "wisdom (or philosophy) of Illumination" (*ḥikmat al-ishrāq*) was the most immediate and influential precursor of Sadra's own philosophic effort, in its experiential sources and concentration on the problem of transcendence, in its conceptual resources (creatively reworking the problems and vocabulary of Avicennan philosophy in light of this problem), and in its more comprehensive political intentions—that is, in the effort to affect the guiding symbols and interpretations of transcendence in the larger community. Sadra's work can in fact be understood as a completion and extension of Suhrawardi's youthful and pioneering efforts: the important changes in Sadra's own approach (section C-4 below) seem to have been greatly influenced by more mature reflection on the causes and lessons of Suhrawardi's fate.

C. Sadra's Response

All of Mulla Sadra's writings are oriented toward the realization, at many levels, of that noetic reality of transcendence which he

[39] Those intellectual resources would also include Plotinus (via the Arabic *Theology of "Aristotle,"* which Sadra quotes numerous times in this and other works) and other Neoplatonic writings familiar in Arabic translations; these were major sources of Suhrawardi's own creative philosophizing.

There was a long tradition of Avicennan commentators (including Sadra's own teacher, Mīr Dāmād) who had interpreted Suhrawardi in terms of their own categories and notions of philosophy, minimizing his departures from Avicenna and his obvious focus on the experience of transcendence (the "illumination" or "enlightenment" in the title of his major work, *Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq*). Sadra's corrections of Suhrawardi (cf. Chapter C-4 below) are mainly intended to clarify the fundamental differences between Avicenna and Suhrawardi and to defend the essential nature of Suhrawardi's original insights.

calls, among many other things, the "Transcendent Wisdom" *(al-ḥikma al-muta'ālīya)* or the "Wisdom of the divine Throne" *(al-ḥikma al-'arshīya,* the title of the work translated here). It is the noetic Source of an inner awareness and insight into the reality of being which, in his view, has been expressed time and again in the lives and sayings of the "godlike sages" *(al-ḥukamā' al-muta'allihūn)* and "completely human beings"—those enlightened prophets, philosophers, and saints who have existed in every community throughout history.[40] On the theoretical level, then, Sadra's writings are designed to point to that reality underlying all the historically given symbols of transcendence—and at the same time, to remove some of the many intellectual obstacles to a clearer vision of the full extent of that reality and its larger implications. This last effort, he indicates, requires a continual renewal and redirection of that "official wisdom" *(al-ḥikma al-rasmīya)* which is the prevailing complex of traditional interpretations mediating the understanding of the guiding symbols of transcendence in the community as a whole: wisdom or philosophy, in all its forms, is the "return" of those symbols to their original intentions.

The various facets of the "official wisdom" of Sadra's own time have just been briefly mentioned. This section outlines the major features of his original reworking of all those traditions, as that is illustrated in *The Wisdom of the Throne* and, at far greater length, in his other writings. A complete appreciation of his intention also requires consideration of the different audiences and assumptions he could expect his writings to encounter; those dimensions of his response are discussed in sections D and E below. Here we shall concentrate on the formal features of his reinterpretation of each of the traditions discussed in the preceding section. Again, to forestall a common misunderstanding, it must be stressed that his ultimate concern in each of these cases is not with somehow replacing or

[40] The two senses of the Arabic term *al-ḥikma*—as divine "Wisdom" and the historical tradition of Greek and pre-Islamic "philosophy"—correspond to the two integral aspects of transcendence viewed as the noetic "Reality of Being" (Part I, §1), and as the ongoing process of its human realization (the "Return," in Part II). The deeper relation of both meanings in Sadra's thought should become clearer in the discussions in Chapters V and VI below. Many of Sadra's terms used to express this contrast in this paragraph—as well as the larger historical vision it implies—were taken over directly from the writings of Suhrawardi.

correcting each discipline in itself (that is, as it was traditionally understood), so much as it is in directing readers starting on any of these paths toward the common reality underlying those divergent interpretations. Sadra's writings, as he conceived them, are themselves only another partial means to realizing an understanding that has been reached—and ably expressed—many times before.

1. *Kalam.* Sadra's treatment of the kalam theology closely follows the twofold approach of earlier Islamic philosophers: he systematically destroys its arguments and pretensions to philosophic truth, while at the same time clearing the way for a reappropriation of the originally intended ambivalent meanings of its theological language, as they were understood by the true philosophers. Sadra's expanded conception of this last group to include the "godlike sages" and enlightened "knowers" (the *'urafā'*) does not affect his basic agreement on this point with his philosophic predecessors, who had seen the kalam as a dangerous dialectical expansion of popular beliefs—themselves useful, and in any case unavoidable among the multitude—into an exclusive official ideology that could choke off all genuine inquiry and the pursuit of that wisdom which is man's ultimate end, and which should properly guide the larger community. In fact, Sadra often alludes to (and sometimes even explicitly mentions) the essential connection between tyrants and the dominance in many Islamic communities of a class of theologians and jurists whose conception of "God" was of an arbitrary monarch unbounded by reason.[41] To be sure, the kalam positions Sadra most vigorously attacks are those of Sunni writers such as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209). But Rāzī's procedures and conclusions were not really different in substance from those of the theology (and more general type of belief) underlying the dominant legalist understanding of Shiism: Sadra allows the perceptive reader to draw his own conclusions.

At the same time, again following earlier philosophic precedents, Sadra is very careful not to contradict openly or to undermine the formulae and assumptions of naive popular belief. In fact, on the two points where some Aristotelean philosophers were notoriously suspected of contradicting basic religious beliefs—namely, the crea-

[41] For example, see Part II-B, §4; and the *Shawāhid*, pp. 108-109.

tion of the world and the universal bodily resurrection, Sadra's philosophy contains new formulae that are outwardly in far closer agreement with the common dogmas than the positions of those earlier philosophers. (The reality underlying those expressions will be discussed in Chapters V and VI below.) According to earlier Islamic philosophers (and certain Sufis as well), this fundamental ambivalence of meaning was an intentional and essential aspect of the symbols of revelation: not because the literal, popular understanding is an intentional deception of the many, but because the ultimate philosophic meaning (in Sadra's view, the Reality of Being or transcendence) refers to a level of realization, of experience and insight, that is not ordinarily found in men and hence can in no way be literally expressed. Attempts to express that sort of realization openly—such as the famous ecstatic paradoxes of the Sufis—could therefore only lead to dangerous misunderstandings in most cases. The special wisdom of the prophets, in this view, therefore consisted partly in their promulgation of symbols that could function effectively on both planes of understanding, with sufficient ambiguity to lead properly prepared individuals to an eventual recognition of the inner philosophic intention. Sadra's own writing, as explained at several points below (cf. III-E, IV-C, V-B, VI-B), reflects a thoroughly conscious and deliberate application of this insight.

A final important aspect in Sadra's consideration of kalam is his treatment of the Imamate, an issue that of course had crucial practical implications in the Shiite setting where he was writing. Here it may simply be noted that once again his philosophic treatment of that subject in *The Wisdom of the Throne* and other works is thoughtfully scattered in different sections, and well balanced with pious formulaic expressions that would clearly fit with the popular historical conception of the Imams. This is an area in which misunderstanding of what was meant by "knowing the imam" could obviously lead to dangerous confusions: there was a long and often violent history of Shiite sectarian movements and messianic uprisings surrounding charismatic figures—including the early Safavids—who had claimed a sort of privileged access to the wisdom of the Imams (often understood in a political or worldly sense), or a similar status expressed in Sunni terms (such as that of the *quṭb* or

mahdī). Sadra's understanding of the "imam" leads in a very different direction.

2. *Avicennan metaphysics.* There are three basic aspects to Sadra's creative adaptation of the Avicennan philosophic tradition. First and most importantly, there is his claim of the "completion" of that metaphysics by restoring the centrality of the problem of transcendence and the reality of Being.[42] Viewed historically, this aspect appears as a systematic rewriting of the basic experiential insights of Ibn Arabi and Suhrawardi (as well as earlier Platonic philosophers) in terms of the language and expositional structure of the traditional Avicennan metaphysics (cf. B-3 and 4 above). To a great extent, Sadra builds on the similar earlier attempt by Suhrawardi, but with the very important difference that where Suhrawardi typically expressed his insights concerning transcendence either in direct opposition to the prevailing interpretations of Avicenna or in a complex personal symbolism, Sadra more often treats his own contributions as a fulfillment of or return to the intentions of earlier philosophers (especially Plato).

This consciously harmonizing treatment of earlier philosophers (at least when compared with Sadra's more uncompromising attitude toward kalam writers) is a recurrent theme in his books, and it clearly reflects his preoccupation with correcting both the ethical and irrationalist excesses of which Sufis and related groups were widely (if not always fairly) accused, and the equally unfortunate popular misunderstandings of the intentions of their practices and paradoxical sayings. The other side of his elaborate insertion of the problem of transcendence within the classical philosophic tradition, therefore, is that he sees that tradition's essential postulates of the intelligible ordering of the world, and of an ultimate common ground of communication and rational discourse, as both culminating in and ultimately depending on that Reality which is realized in the condition of transcendence.

42 In *The Wisdom of the Throne*, see Sadra's expressions of this common theme in the Prologue; Part II-A, §1; and the Concluding Testament, among other places. The passage in the Concluding Testament defending the philosophers, despite their occasional shortcomings, is an especially important indication of Sadra's concern with safeguarding the integrity of the philosophic tradition as a whole.

Hence the "logic of transcendence" which is the primary subject of Sadra's original metaphysical theses is not conceived of as opposed to or somehow superseding that logic of our ordinary, unenlightened forms of perception which he saw manifested in the system of Aristotelean (and Ptolemaic and Galenic) natural sciences, logic, and so on. The two sorts of accounts, he indicates, are entirely compatible—provided that one has actually realized the distinctive level of experience to which the metaphysical language refers—and he tries in great detail to show how and why this is so.[43] What Sadra is indicating can be expressed negatively as the recognition that the inner realization of transcendence does not essentially involve "knowledge" of any new object, fact, or material state of affairs: it is a unique dimension of awareness bound up with man's innermost noetic nature, and has nothing to do directly with the acquisition or conceptual refinement of any knowledge or set of beliefs. The list of negations could go on indefinitely, but the essential point is the corrective this recognition could apply to the recurrent confusions between the incomplete experience of enlightenment and more common forms of knowledge and belief, distinctions that were not always clearly made in Ibn Arabi, Suhrawardi, and others who had reflected on this subject. However, it must immediately be added that Sadra's discussions in themselves can convey little of the positive reality and intrinsic value of the condition of transcendence; as we have mentioned, that is something he largely assumes. And even the corrective aspect of those discussions is meaningful only to a reader who is actually engaged in the process of realization, since the only positive, ultimately convincing "proof" of Sadra's metaphysical assertions lies in the deepening personal experience of the condition to which they refer.[44]

This last fact—that the essential experiential premises of Sadra's

[43] At the same time, he stresses that neither sort of *account* is dependent on the other, although the underlying reality is certainly one. His metaphysics, unlike certain interpretations of Aristotle, does not begin with or depend on the Aristotelean (or any other) account of physical nature. It is equally compatible with any account of physical (or psychic) phenomena, and in fact cannot be "disproven." The proof of its "truth" and usefulness—as Sadra himself was well aware (cf. Chapter II)—lies in a different domain and activity.

[44] In this connection, see Sadra's important remarks on the nature of the crucial "proof" required in this domain, in his Concluding Testament.

metaphysics are not equally given and are difficult to acquire—underlies the third major feature in his adaptation of the earlier Avicennan tradition, which is his retention of its general understanding of the relation of religion and philosophy. The basic motivations and assumptions of that perspective were discussed above (B-3), and some of their further implications for Sadra's style of writing will be examined in III-E below. Here it is sufficient to add that Sadra's focus on the experience of transcendence would only tend to confirm the guiding concerns of earlier philosophers: this kind of metaphysical "knowing" is even more deeply bound up with basic differences in individual endowment, and it seems even more closely connected to that potentially dangerous recognition of the relativity of particular social norms and arrangements. At the same time, though, Sadra's almost exclusive focus on the question of transcendence and the paths of realization does call into question the relative value—if not the reality—of what the earlier Peripatetic philosophers had primarily considered "knowledge" (that is, of the forms and regularities of physical nature), in relation to the far more extensive domains of psychic or incorporeal reality explored by others whom they might not have recognized as "philosophers."

3. *Ibn Arabi and Sufism.* Sadra's reworking of the writings of Ibn Arabi and the complex traditions of Sufism they represent has two equally essential aspects. On the one hand, he uses extensive quotations from those works to indicate the indispensable experiential grounds of his discussions and the concrete problems that arise for each individual along the "journey" of realization, at whatever level it is considered. On the other hand, by considering these questions within the much larger and explicitly universal context of the Avicennan philosophic tradition, he is able to clarify crucial problems of the wider manifestations and connections of the reality of transcendence with regard to other aspects of man's existence—most notably, our knowledge of physical nature and the complex conventions of belief and standards of right behavior relating the individual and the community. Reflection on this larger context of the question of transcendence leads to a much deeper appreciation of the historical and transhistorical task and intentions of the prophets.

This is true whether Sadra's reader begins from the side of Ibn Arabi or from some other perspective, such as that of the Avicennan philosophers: the two aspects are equally indispensable. In the latter case, the reader would find the influence of Ibn Arabi (and the experience of transcendence and the larger traditions he represents) so all-pervasive that, if he wished to make any sense of Sadra's writing at all, he would have first to acquire those other essential premises and reorient his thinking in terms of the perspectives they reveal. Yet the contrast between Sadra's philosophy and the writings of Ibn Arabi—and even more, the larger body of literatures, disciplines, and organizations of "practical" Sufism that they represent—is equally obvious. That fundamental difference is quite apparent if one compares *The Wisdom of the Throne* with relatively more popular works like Ibn Arabi's.

In Sadra's philosophy, there is a decisive shift in focus from the process of individual transformation—although that is always presumed in his reflections—toward a much more comprehensive perspective. From that standpoint, the integration of the individual process with factors that could ordinarily be taken for granted, such as the social, political, and religious context become open and unavoidable questions. In reality, of course, such problems are in any case always arising along the path of realization. In Islamic history, as Sadra was keenly aware, one such recurrent question was that of the relation of Sufism (or the broader process of human perfection) and the grounds, interpretation, and application of a comprehensive religious Law.[45] Sadra's philosophy, in a sense, begins *and ends* with that sort of question: it does not—and cannot—culminate in a single program or universal formula for action and belief. Indeed, one of its most valuable contributions, for readers who actually grasp his perspective, may be a deeper insight into the pointlessness

[45] Within the history of Sufi movements alone—which Sadra, as both a philosopher and esoteric Shiite, would by no means identify exclusively with the paths of realization in his community—there was a vast range of attitudes on this issue: they extended across a spectrum from fiercely orthodox defenders of the Law as understood by its clerical defenders to *bī-shar'* ("lawless" *qalandarī* and *malāmatīya*) extreme antinomian movements to others, such as Ismaili Shiism, in which the Law was envisaged as a progressive and continuing revelation (through a living Imam), according to historical circumstances and opportunities.

and dangers of that sort of demand. What it can do is to help reveal the larger human situation, the actual constant community of being, in light of which positively effective action and speech are possible under any circumstances. Or as Sadra expresses it, it can help one to discover who the "imam" really is.

4. *Suhrawardi.* Sadra, as we have mentioned, basically understood Suhrawardi's "philosophy (or wisdom) of Illumination" (*ḥikmat al-ishrāq*) as an earlier, if tragically incomplete, effort along the same lines of understanding as his own work, sharing common aims and approaches and many of the same sources—especially the contributions of the accomplished Sufis and the Avicennan philosophic tradition. Sadra's corrections and additions to Suhrawardi's work are apparent in four main areas: a. his far more extensive assimilation of materials from Islamic contemplative traditions (especially Shiite sources, but also Ibn Arabi) and from later theological and philosophical writers; b. the philosophic analysis of Suhrawardi's own metaphysical symbolism (especially his elaborate imagery of cosmic Light and "illumination"); c. the correction of certain theoretical inconsistencies and residues of a "Peripatetic" point of view on important metaphysical questions; and d. evidence of extensive reflection on the lessons and underlying causes of Suhrawardi's martyrdom and relative historical ineffectiveness. Since Sadra's treatment of Suhrawardi's more original symbolism follows the same lines as his understanding of similar Islamic religious materials (especially in Ibn Arabi), only the last two points need be discussed here.

One important example of Sadra's correction of Suhrawardi in *The Wisdom of the Throne* (II-A, §§5 and 11) has to do with the ontological status of psychic, nonphysical being; in religious language, this is phrased as the question of the "bodily resurrection." As Sadra correctly points out, Suhrawardi's explanations of this issue (in regard to the soul's "imaginal world," *'ālam al-mithāl*) use the form-matter analogy in a way that does not sufficiently clarify the fundamental distinction between elemental, physical matter and the incorporeal "matter" of psychic representations. The failure to make that distinction, and to recognize the full ontic autonomy of psychic reality, is closely connected with Suhrawardi's more tradi-

tionally Neoplatonic focus on worship of the celestial souls and intelligences and angelic hierarchies—a feature totally absent from Sadra's philosophy. It also left room for a potential confusion of Suhrawardi's transcendent "knowing" (or "enlightenment," in his language) with the traditional Avicennan epistemology of abstraction from natural material forms.[46] This correction illustrates a general tendency in Sadra's treatment of his more "mystical" sources: he is far more careful than was Suhrawardi (or similar Sufi authors) to show the way the special kind of "knowing" (*ma'rifa*) arising from the condition of enlightenment does not contradict or add to the particular objective *contents* of our ordinary, unenlightened ways of apprehending the physical and social worlds.[47] In contrast, Suhrawardi—like Ibn Arabi and others more concerned with bringing about the actual experiential recognition of transcendence—had often concentrated on the radical, but unspecified "difference" of this sort of experience. But the rhetoric suitable to that purpose, although useful, could also lead to dangerous delusions and unwarranted expectations. Sadra's whole elaborate conceptual effort is aimed largely at removing those mistaken impressions of "irrationalism" (or worse) to which that sort of rhetoric has often given rise.

Finally, Sadra's writings—which, it is important to note, date from fairly late in his life—reflect a far more cautious and complex

[46] Sadra's long discussions of the transcendence and ontic autonomy of psychic reality in Parts II-A and II-B of *The Wisdom of the Throne* continue central inspirations in Suhrawardi's work, and are mainly directed against the limited ontological focus (on physical being) of the traditional Peripatetic epistemology. At the same time, Sadra here (and in more detail in his longer works) strongly criticizes those aspects of Suhrawardi's treatment of the "imaginal world" (*'alam al-mithāl*) of soul that did not, in his opinion, sufficiently clarify the ontic independence of "soul" as a separate and universal modality of being encompassing all physical reality. Cf. the discussions of this issue in Chapter VI-A.

[47] The confusion that often arises in this area is natural, since the growing awareness of transcendence usually does go hand in hand with a deepening consciousness of the vast extent of the incorporeal, psychic dimensions of being. But those realms and powers can also be deeply explored by those—such as shamans and yogis—who have no particular realization of transcendence. The distinction Sadra is pointing to (and which is also clearly drawn by many Sufi writers) is a fundamental one: the signs of enlightenment are most clearly manifested in the "knower's" inner ethical orientation, or power of love, not in his particular visions or magical powers (*karamāt*, siddhis, etc.). Cf. the related discussions of this issue in Chapter VI-A.

attitude toward existing religious symbolism and the prevailing public forms of its interpretation. This may have much to do simply with age and greater experience. In any case, Sadra's work does not attempt to import or revive a new symbolism of enlightenment, such as Suhrawardi's reworking of pre-Islamic Persian and Neoplatonic imagery: he uses the interpretation of Shiite tradition for a similar purpose. Nor, so far as we know, did Sadra hope for the radical imposition of a particular new doctrine, ritual practice, or point of view, in the way that Suhrawardi evidently sought to influence the ruler of Aleppo (Saladin's son) and others in his circle.

There is a vivid dramatic tension in many of Suhrawardi's writings, as though he sometimes thought that the major barriers to the wider realization of transcendence were simply those existing on the level of understanding and public "knowledge." Sadra's mature works show much less sign of such extreme worldly expectations: he could not easily be accused—as Suhrawardi was—of pretensions to prophethood. The following two sections are concerned with the different kinds of effectiveness Sadra's writings were intended to have.

D. The Audiences

Sadra's writings assume two primary levels of impact with regard to the different traditions we have mentioned: there is his immediate audience, a narrow group of highly educated scholars, trained for the most part in the religious schools and at least superficially acquainted with the various theoretical disciplines (all in the Arabic language) treated in his philosophy; and there are a number of indirect audiences, together making up the rest of his community, whose understanding of religion—which in that setting extended to virtually every area of life—was assumed to be ultimately guided and directed, in various ways, by the interpretations of those literate scholars. The assumption of this substantial indirect influence, although it might be conceived and exercised in very different ways, was common to virtually all of Sadra's readers. Some dimensions of that assumption have already been mentioned, and other important ones are outlined in the next section. Our remarks here are limited to the different groups of literate readers for whom Sadra's works were composed.

The most important point with regard to those readers was that in most cases they could not be strictly identified with any one of the traditions or theoretical disciplines we have discussed; Sadra's own multifaceted education and intellectual approach was by no means exceptional at this period. Individuals trained in Avicennan philosophy, for example, were very likely to be well acquainted with the standard kalam texts and with the major commentaries on Ibn Arabi; and much the same was true, to some degree, for individuals whose primary allegiance might be to a different tradition. In sum, each tradition had developed its own intellectual tools for dismissing or integrating the primary goals and approaches of the others, and all shared a common kalam theological vocabulary for conveying those very real differences to more public audiences. (The situation in the medieval West was analogous.)

Sadra's theoretical writings, therefore, are most directly aimed at the competing claims and implications of these different traditions among a small group of highly trained intellectuals. And they are written—like almost all advanced works in those traditions—to be taught and commented on *orally*, in a situation where the interests and preparation of each student can readily be judged and appropriately guided. At that level, the most decisive point, as far as the main subject of Sadra's works is concerned, is the predisposition and inner orientation of the student with regard to the problem of transcendence. From that point of view, the potential readers can be roughly divided into four groups.

1. The first such group would be highly educated philosophers and theologians whose primary approach to the issues raised by Ibn Arabi (as to their own disciplines) tended to be theoretical and conceptual. They might even be well-versed in the traditions of scholarly commentary on Ibn Arabi and Suhrawardi, but would often be scornful or suspicious of the more popular expressions of Sufism and esoteric Shiism. Their attitude toward the larger body of relatively ignorant and dogmatic religious scholars would be a circumspect combination of intellectual condescension and prudent reserve.

2. The second, somewhat smaller group would include individuals like Sadra himself (or Suhrawardi), capably trained in the

same theoretical disciplines, but with a more developed inward sympathy for and awareness of the problems and prospects raised by the experience of transcendence. Such persons would probably already have devoted considerable reflection to the dilemmas of realization as they had arisen in their own lives and in earlier exemplary Islamic figures and movements.

3. A third group—larger than either of the first two—would be those relative beginners (some of them sincere seekers and potential philosophers) who, though literate in Arabic, were not so highly educated, and whose inner dispositions would ultimately direct them toward one or the other of the groups just mentioned.

4. The final group—probably the largest of all—could be loosely classified as "potential enemies." It would include all those, especially among the less sophisticated and relatively uneducated Shiite clerics, who already tended to perceive one or more of the traditions in which Sadra was working as either useless or dangerously heretical and un-Islamic, or both. In any case, they would only understand what he was attempting to do in terms of their set preconceptions about those other traditions—usually understood as teaching a certain "doctrine" or set of beliefs (that is, a "philosophy" in the popular sense of the term).

Sadra's writings are directed, with differing emphases, toward affecting all of these groups, according to the specific capacities and background of each one. Those different intentions require a style of writing capable of conveying several levels of meaning simultaneously. Some of the assumptions underlying that elaborate rhetorical construction, so beautifully illustrated in *The Wisdom of the Throne*, are examined in the following section.

E. Rhetoric: Assumptions of Esotericism

The significance of assumptions of esotericism and appropriately veiled and multivalent writing that prevailed among educated readers in Sadra's community can hardly be exaggerated. The first point that must be made, given the unfamiliarity of this style of writing for most modern readers, is that these assumptions were in fact virtually universal, in varying forms, throughout Sadra's culture:

almost no later Islamic writing, outside the narrow philological disciplines, can be properly appreciated without an informed awareness of these pervasive factors.

The second crucial point is that this kind of writing is dictated by certain humanly common, rational, and realistic considerations. It has nothing to do with a "secret teaching," hidden meanings, or any other sort of intentional mystification. Those considerations dictating Sadra's style of writing are basically threefold: they have to do with the specific social and political circumstances in which he was writing; the technical vocabulary and general operating assumptions of the specific disciplines with which he was working; and levels of understanding that cannot be taught or explained "literally," but only expressed indirectly or allusively, through symbols whose reality is apparent only to someone sharing the decisive original insight or experience. Problems with the first two sets of factors, although they are quite complex in Sadra's writing, are basically historical in nature and can eventually be clarified to a great degree; much of the material in this introduction and in the notes to the translation is intended to explain those features of Sadra's writing. The final set of considerations is truly universal and applies to anyone—philosophers, mystics, and poets—who has ever written or spoken on these particular subjects. It is at that level, where individual preparedness is so decisive, that the role of oral commentary and private study was most essential. Attempting to reduce those insights to a systematic "doctrine" or written teaching gives only a gross parody of the writer's intentions.

The following comments indicate only the most general ways in which those considerations related to the composition and reading of Sadra's books. It should be kept in mind that any given feature of his style of writing—his use of theological language, for example —may at the same time have meanings relevant to several or all of these considerations, depending on the reader in question.

1. *Social and political circumstances.*[48] A first crucial factor on this level—common to all premodern societies, but often forgotten

[48] The best historical introduction to the central role of esotericism in high culture in Sadra's period and more generally in later Islamic civilization is in M.G.S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, II, pp. 192-200. For a more concrete

today—is the extremely small and highly sophisticated nature of the educated religious class in Sadra's time, and the assumption of considerable influence that a creative and active member of that elite group could hope to exercise over the larger society, either through direct involvement with the secular rulers (as with many earlier Islamic philosophers, such as Alfarabi, Avicenna, Averroes, Tusi, and Suhrawardi) or, as in Sadra's case, through gradually changing the education and assumptions of the most influential religious scholars and teachers. Another side of this same reality was the multiple meanings that theological and metaphysical disputes had on the social and political plane. This has been true in the Islamic world up to the present day; in Sadra's own time, the most decisive issue of this sort was the question of the nature of the Imamate, which had obvious implications for any interpretation of a Shiite religiopolitical and legal order.[49] Other important implications of Sadra's theological discussions on this wider social and cultural level at that time have already been outlined above (III, A-C).

A second fundamental feature of the sociopolitical situation in later Islamic times was the extreme hostility of an important segment of the educated clerical class toward all those movements of interpretation and inquiry—whether they be relatively popular or more elite and purely theoretical—that were perceived as questioning or otherwise threatening a very narrowly defined standard of right belief and practice. Given that constant danger, which had resulted in a number of famous martyrdoms, a wide range of movements and tendencies of interpretation all developed their own technical vocabularies and distinctive methods of writing that would allow them to pursue those creative interests while not outwardly flouting the publicly accepted "orthodoxy." The most im-

sense of the actual sociopolitical background of Sadra's esotericism (and the traditions with which it was associated) in nineteenth-century Iran, see the chapter on Mulla Sadra and his disciples in Gobineau, *Les religions et les philosophies dans l'Asie centrale*, pp. 80-106, and all of E. G. Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians*. None of these authors should be relied on, however, for insight into the more strictly philosophic import and motivations of Sadra's style of writing: cf. n. 50 below.

[49] For the general historical background of this problem, see Chapters III-A and III-F.

portant of these traditions on the theoretical level, in Sadra's case, were those we have broadly termed Avicennan philosophy, Sufism (especially the school of Ibn Arabi), and esoteric Shiism. In this translation of *The Wisdom of the Throne*, one can get a sense of this first public and superficial level of meaning, shared by all those traditions, by glancing through the detailed Table of Contents or simply skimming the text without the aid of the notes.

In all of these traditions, however, this kind of double (or manifold) meaning and complex style of writing had become an elaborately developed art long before Sadra's time. At that level, it formed part of the common operating assumptions of specialists in any of those disciplines and of most sophisticated readers. And finally, this question of the popular understanding (or misunderstanding) and function of those disciplines and their writing culminates in philosophic, truly "esoteric" considerations of the third order, which are at the very heart of Sadra's concerns: that dimension is discussed at several points below.

2. *Technical vocabulary and methods.* At this level, Sadra's more original contribution is evident in his creative reworking and intermingling of several traditions that had remained relatively separate. His constant juxtaposition of technical terms, premises, and problems drawn from one theoretical tradition with those of another forces his readers either to think for themselves and return to the underlying realities in question—or else to attempt the difficult reduction of all of those perspectives to a single point of view. For the most part, references to those technical terms and problems and their original historical contexts are given in the footnotes to the translation.

Many other equally important features of Sadra's intentionally esoteric style of writing in this category, taken both from the philosophers and Suhrawardi or Ibn Arabi, can best be seen by actually reading *The Wisdom of the Throne*. Some of the most pervasive of these devices are the scattering of premises and arguments relative to a common problem (such as knowledge of the "imam"), the use of apparent contradictions and obvious logical fallacies and *non sequiturs,* false or unreliable premises, criticism of a point of view one actually holds (or support of an obviously inadequate opinion),

and so forth. Some of these practices relate to prudential considerations of the first order, while many others point to insights and connections that require a special effort of understanding and could not in any case be stated in a plain and unambiguous manner. What Sadra ultimately means by "knowing the imam," for example, is clearly of this nature.

3. *Premises and conclusions.*[50] Many of the reasons for these considerations of the third order flow from the situation outlined in Chapter II above. Two further points may be mentioned here.

First, at least three of the traditions central to Sadra's philosophic activity—Avicennan philosophy, Ibn Arabi's Sufism, and Shiite esotericism—were founded, each in its own way, on the assumption that the insight (or inquiry) in which each culminated was by no means immediately or universally accessible, but rather depended on certain relatively rare natural capacities and inclinations. Sadra's metaphysics suggests a point at which each of these traditions may be seen to converge. It is the paradoxical conclusion of his philosophy that that "secret" at which each of these paths arrives is only hidden because it is truly universal, like an eye trying to see itself. The problem of esotericism, therefore, does not arise at that point—where each of us truly (if often unknowingly) stands—but along the multitude of ways to it. Sadra's understanding of religion and prophecy, and of their relation to philosophy, flows from that paradoxical situation.

Second, the language of prophetic revelation, in all three of these traditions, was understood to be *essentially* esoteric: not because the primary meaning was deliberately concealed, but because it could only be misunderstood when perceived from any other perspective than the condition of transcendence it actually expressed. From this standpoint, the special art—and continual dilemma—of the prophet

[50] The best general introduction to the kinds of assumptions Sadra took over from the earlier Islamic philosophic tradition, at all three of the levels mentioned here, is perhaps Leo Strauss's *Persecution and the Art of Writing*. For the application of those principles to the reading of a medieval philosophic text not unlike *The Wisdom of the Throne*, see also Strauss's "How to Begin to Study *The Guide of the Perplexed*," pp. xi-lvi, and S. Pines' "Translator's Introduction," pp. lvii to cxxxiv, in Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*. The situation underlying the "esotericism" of Sufi and Shiite texts is outlined in Chapter II above.

(understood as statesman and lawgiver) had to do with the responsible and careful use of both those possible levels of meaning, and beyond that, with the integration of those two dimensions of existence that together constitute the "completely human being" (*al-insān al-kāmil*). Sadra's understanding of the relation of philosophic language and the symbolic language of revelation (*lughat al-shar'*) can only be fully comprehended in this context. His philosophic concepts are not intended to replace the Koranic symbols of transcendence either at their Source or in their manifold social functions. Rather, they (and their counterparts in every society) are conceived as the indispensable tools of interpretation, the mediators in those conflicts and misundrstandings that forever arise in what Sadra calls man's "Return" to that Source. They work, however, only by pointing back once again to what the symbol has always expressed: Sadra does not confuse his pointers with That to which they point.

F. Posterity

This section is not intended as a history of Mulla Sadra's influence —something that would in itself require a large volume—but simply as a further illustration of some of the basic points that have already been made concerning the historical context and larger intentions of his work. Perhaps most important is that the influence of his work should not be sought simply on the plane of what he called "official wisdom (or philosophy)" (*al-ḥikma al-rasmīya*), of the scholastic commentary of written texts. Those who best comprehended his intentions were not necessarily philosophy professors, and they would not necessarily even have mentioned his name.

This can already be seen in the first generation of his students, the best known of whom were his two sons-in-law, Mullā Muḥsin "Fayḍ" Kāshānī (d. 1090/1680) and 'Abd al-Razzāq Lāhījī (d. 1071/1661).[51] Both were prolific authors, the first most famous for his

[51] See the notices on both authors in Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, IV, 432-436, and Gobineau, *Philosophies*, pp. 90-92.

Gobineau's remarks concerning Lāhījī (taken from an informant in the nineteenth-century Iranian oral tradition of Sadra's philosophy) are a beautiful illustration of the general social climate in which Sadra himself was working: "It seems that the suspicions of the mullas and their antipathy for this teaching

poetry and the second for his religious and theological writings; but neither man was a mere commentator on Sadra's works. Sadra's continuing influence, instead, is to be seen in their secret defense of Sufism and the suspect writings of Ibn Arabi (with all they represented), and especially in their Akhbārī interpretation of Shiism—a direct continuation of Sadra's own passionate opposition to the dominant legalist (Uṣūlī) conception.[52] In any case, the narrowly

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increased even more after the death of Mulla Sadra. At that time they held several demonstrations against the disciples of the master and tried to arouse both the powerful and the masses against them, by accusing them of heresy. Mullā 'Abd al-Razzāq . . . multiplied his Shiite professions of faith even beyond what Mulla Sadra had judged necessary. He went further: he cursed Avicenna and Ibn Arabi, calling them impenitent heretics and diabolical spirits. . . . As for the many books of Mullā 'Abd al-Razzāq, even for the most inquisitive reader they give absolutely nothing to excite suspicion, so that when one has read them, one must agree on his complete orthodoxy. However, his disciples, aided by the oral tradition, know what to look for and recognize in these works the true doctrine of Mulla Sadra." The reader should be cautioned that Gobineau himself had—beyond his Persian informants—no personal acquaintance with Sadra's work, and that his image of Sadra's philosophy along the lines of an Enlightenment *libre penseur* reflects his own philosophic preconceptions and a very different notion of "enlightenment" than that motivating Sadra's work. His remarks should be connected with what was said concerning the primarily *oral* context of the original teaching of Sadra's works, in Section D above.

52 For a brief account of the relation of the Uṣūlīs and Akhbārīs, and the historical genesis of the latter group as a specific school, see Browne, *A Literary History*, IV, 374-376, and Corbin, *En Islam*, iv, 129, 249-252.

As for the names of these two groups, the *uṣūl* were the "foundations" or corpus of interpretive principles that the legalists relied upon to derive a comprehensive religious Law from the restricted body of traditions of the Prophet and Imams. A fundamental feature of their conception of religion was the division of the community into qualified clerical interpreters (the *mujtahids*) and the laity (*muqallidūn*) who, in this view, were supposed to follow authoritative guidance in all matters of action and belief. In contrast, the *akhbār* were the actual literal reports or traditional sayings themselves. Often—as one can readily see in Sadra's commentaries—those sayings were quite limited in their obvious practical bearing, and focused instead on personal spirituality.

The "Akhbārī" epithet appears to have been applied to two ultimately quite opposing tendencies, both of which have roots going back to very early Shiism, in contrasting forms of Ismaili speculation. (Those same inner possibilities are likewise reflected in the contrasting historical forms of the Protestant "return to scripture.") One of these, represented by Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī (n. 55 below), saw Shiism as radically exclusivist and sectarian. For others, including Mulla Sadra, the Akhbārī position offered a much more open arena for a universalist, philosophic apprehension of the meaning of scripture, since the primary or literal meaning of the symbols of revelation, in this view, was precisely that which

legalistic and clerical Shiite tendency, with its traditional hostility to virtually all forms of free artistic and intellectual life—including especially the universalistic philosophic and Sufi elements most central to Sadra's writing—gained overwhelming public power (at least in urban clerical circles) in the generations immediately following Sadra's death, so that throughout the eighteenth century his work was kept alive only on the level of an extensive oral transmission. We have the names of those teachers, but know relatively little of their larger activity.[53]

In contrast, nineteenth-century Iran, with the development of a relatively stable political and economic order, saw Sadra's sudden emergence as very much an "official philosopher." Many of his books were taught and commented upon (and even translated into Persian) by a succession of notable scholars in the religious colleges of several Iranian cities. Perhaps the most influential of those teachers was Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī (d. 1295/1878), who developed his own elaborate scholastic synthesis of Sadra's "doctrine"—but who at the same time powerfully demonstrated in his own life a full awareness of the deeper roots of Sadra's thought.[54] To illustrate the

applied to the spiritual condition of all men. (This was essentially the same as Ibn Arabi's Ẓāhirī, or radically "literalist" approach to Sunni tradition.) The understanding of scripture following from this view of the traditions (*akhbār*) is only very ambiguously related to popular conceptions of Shiism as a sect or separate legal school. Finally, the Akhbārī position, with its strong limitations on the clerical interpretation of Islam as a form of Law, may have more generally tempted all those with anticlerical leanings, whatever their motivations, in a way similar to the attractions of socialism in strongly clerical regimes of whatever religion in modern times.

53 For the names of this line of transmission down to Sabzawārī, see Gobineau, *Philosophies*, pp. 90-110; Gobineau also gives (pp. 86-89) an excellent description of the methods by which esoteric writings such as Sadra's were gradually introduced in that outwardly hostile setting. Gobineau's purely historical information (as opposed to his philosophic interpretations) concerning the oral tradition of Sadra's philosophy is confirmed by the modern Iranian representatives of that tradition (cf. the works of J. Āshtiyānī and others). It should be added that although there are numerous manuscripts of some of Sadra's writings dating from that period in Muslim India, they are mainly copies of the less original works. It appears that, for whatever reasons, the oral tradition of his more personal teaching did not take deep root in that milieu.

54 For an account of his life and wider influence, see Browne, *A Year*, pp. 143-156, and the English introduction to *The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī*, translated by Izutsu and Mohaghegh. This latter work is an excellent sample of Sabzawārī's more scholastic interpretation of Sadra's philosophy.

vast extent of real popular interest not only in Sadra's teaching, but also in the issues underlying it, we are told that in Sabzawārī's lifetime, close to a thousand disciples successfully completed the full six-year course that he gave, based on Sadra's work, and that a multitude of other students attended at least part of those lectures, which were held in his fairly remote native town. Even without considering the other notable teachers of Sadra's writing in Isfahan, Tabriz, Tehran, and so on, these figures alone would amount to a significant portion of the educated religious class at that time.

A second side of Sadra's influence in nineteenth-century Iran, not unrelated to the more theoretical study of his writings, was the relation of his work to a variety of Shiite movements that continued the Akhbārī (and earlier esoteric Shiite) tendency of seeking the true meaning of the Imams and their intentions, and of religion in general, in a more immediate relation to the source of revelation—either directly and personally, or through the mediation of an inspired charismatic leader—rather than in obedience to the detailed prescriptions and traditional interpretations of the legalist clerics (the Uṣūlī *fuqahā'*). Now it must be stressed that both this type of movement and the manifold social conflicts with which it was often bound up had a long history in Iran, considerably predating Sadra's own work. In fact, one such nineteenth-century Shiite movement, that of the Shaykhīs, in many ways typifies just the sort of gnostic, exclusivist, and sectarian incomplete interpretation of the experience of transcendence that Sadra was seeking to overcome: the grounds of his dispute with that point of view can be clearly seen in the extremely hostile commentary on *The Wisdom of the Throne* by the founder of that movement, Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī (d. 1241/1826).[55]

In any case, the relevance of Sadra's thought to this kind of movement—whether as real inspiration or on the level of ideology—cannot be ignored. Of course, on this more popular level, as with

[55] For a more accessible account of Aḥsā'ī's essential criticisms of Mulla Sadra—based on a form of early Shiite theology going back at least to Ismaili speculations—see the selections from his commentary on Sadra's *Kitāb al-Mashā'ir* in H. Corbin's notes to his translation of that work. It should be added that this bitter opposition to Mulla Sadra and the philosophic and Sufi side of his writing is most obvious in Shaykh Aḥmad's own writings. The works of his successors bear a much greater imprint of reflection on Sadra's philosophy.

the work of any philosopher, the history of "influences" often becomes the account of creative misunderstandings. Yet perhaps the most authentic continuation of Sadra's deeper philosophic intentions is to be seen in still another of these nineteenth-century Shiite charismatic movements in Iran, that of the Bābīs, who had certain debts to the Shaykhīs, but in this case stressed the more universally human implications of the reality of transcendence.[56]

[56] For both of these movements in their actual social and historical setting, see the vivid personal account by E. G. Browne, in *A Year*, index under Shaykhīs and Bābīs.

CHAPTER IV

The Writings of Mulla Sadra

This chapter indicates the way *The Wisdom of the Throne* is related to the entire body of Sadra's work—both what it has in common with his other writings and what aspects are peculiar to it. The first section outlines the different types of books he wrote and suggests the different purposes for which they were intended. The second section discusses the common structure underlying all of Sadra's philosophical works. And the final section examines the representative and the more distinctive features of *The Wisdom of the Throne*.

A. Types of Writing

The writings of Mulla Sadra—almost all of them in Arabic—fall into three major categories: scriptural commentaries, occasional or polemic pieces, and the technically philosophic works.[57] *The Wisdom of the Throne* belongs to the last group. All of the important writings date from the same relatively late period of his life (cf. III-A, n. 21 above), and all express the same guiding intention and concerns.[58] Books from each of the above-mentioned groups contain the essential content and interpretive perspectives of the other types, only with differing emphases according to their primary audience and aims.

[57] In lieu of individual bibliographic references for each title below, see the fairly complete bibliographic listings in Nasr, *Ṣadr al-Dīn*, pp. 39-53, and Corbin's introduction to Sadra's *Mashā'ir*, pp. 27-41.

[58] For the dating of the *Asfār*, see the important autobiographical remark cited at n. 21 above. Each of Sadra's major works, including *The Wisdom of the Throne*, contains cross-references to virtually all of the others; this makes it impossible to date them in relation to one another, beyond saying that the shorter systematic works and treatises on specific topics (see below) are all clearly abridged or derived from the *Asfār*. Upon closer examination, those points on which Iranian scholars have sometimes detected "doctrinal" differences (such as those concerning the "eternity of Hell" at Part II-C, §13) turn out to be

1. *Scriptural commentaries.* The most important of these are Sadra's commentary on parts of the Koran (*al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*) and his massive interpretation of those sayings of the Shiite Imams that formed the foundations of Shiite faith (*Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Kāfī*). The guiding interpretive principles and concepts in these commentaries are the same as those in Sadra's systematic philosophical works. In turn, the philosophic writings—as is clearly illustrated in *The Wisdom of the Throne*—are filled with extensive commentaries on the Koran, a wide variety of Prophetic and divine sayings (largely drawn from classical Sufi works), and spiritual sayings of the Shiite Imams (especially Ali and Ja'far al-Ṣādiq) taken from all of the canonical collections.

These independent scriptural commentaries, which focus almost entirely on the questions of transcendence and spiritual realization that are at the heart of Sadra's philosophy, seem to have had a twofold purpose. On the one hand, they would direct interested and curious religious readers, who themselves might not be trained in the philosophic tradition, toward the insights to be gained from the further pursuit of those studies. At the same time, for accomplished philosophers and those who had realized the Source of those revelations, they could provide a sort of model of the way one could begin responsibly to convey those insights into the original intentions of the Prophet and Imams to the larger religious community. Sadra recognized that this sort of indirect persuasion was the only truly effective way to transform the narrowly limited views of the large majority of legalist and belief-oriented Shiite clerics in his time.

2. *"Occasional pieces."* This relatively small class includes two books that are nevertheless extremely important indications of the more immediate and public historical concerns underlying all of Sadra's writings. The first of these, *Kasr Aṣnām al-Jāhilīya fī Dhamm al-Mutaṣawwifīn* ("Shattering the Idols of Ignorance, in Criticism of the So-called Sufis"), is a complete, fairly standard manual of the procedures and intentions of classical Sufism, in the barely concealed outer guise of a traditional criticism of the notorious antinomian excesses of certain vulgar Sufis. It indicates the

failures on their part to read closely in light of relative emphases of different levels of meaning for different audiences.

kinds of practical issues underlying two key concerns in all of Sadra's more philosophic writing: showing the essential role of the path of realization of transcendence (as a universal reality) for any adequate understanding of the intentions of revelation; and clarifying the ultimate ends and consequences of that transcendent "knowing" (*ma'rifa*), in relation to more familiar forms of knowledge and belief, so as to avoid the familiar pitfalls of gnostic sectarianism, antinomianism, messianism, and so on.

The second book, *Sih Aṣl* ("Three Fundamental Principles"), Sadra's only important work in Persian, is in a way only the other side of the first. It is a bitingly polemical attack on the claims of the dominant legalist-clerical (Uṣūlī) conception of Shiism in his time, showing how that point of view is antithetical to the philosophic and spiritual perspective developed in all of Sadra's writings.[59] His passionate denunciation of that group of religious scholars in the Prologue and Concluding Testament of *The Wisdom of the Throne* is quite typical of the contents of the introductions to all of his systematic works. As we have indicated in many places, all of his writings are directed toward removing, in all the ways possible, the theoretical and practical misunderstanding that had led to what he perceived as this historically tragic perversion of the true intentions of the Prophet and the Imams.

3. *Philosophical writings.* These works could be separated into three further subgroups: there are the comprehensive and systematic books, covering the whole range of philosophic and theological topics connected with the central question of transcendence; there is a wide range of shorter treatises (*rasā'il*) devoted to individual topics or a related narrower set of questions; and there are long commentaries on several of the standard textbooks in the philosophic curriculum of the day, most notably the metaphysical part of Avicenna's *Kitāb al-Shifā'* ("The Book of Healing") and Suhrawardi's *Hikmat al-Ishrāq* ("The Wisdom of Illumination").

All of these works presume an extensive background in those philosophical and theological traditions discussed in the last chapter: they were apparently all written, in the first place, for different

[59] See the remarks on the historical background of this dispute in Chapter III-A and F.

levels of oral instruction in the theological schools where Sadra was teaching. However, the shorter treatises are in most cases either abridgments or collections of passages taken verbatim from the *Asfār* (the longest of the systematic works). And the commentaries are either straightforward explanations or, where Sadra's more original perspectives are concerned (as in his enormous commentary on Suhrawardi), their content is again substantially repeated in the *Asfār*. For these reasons, the systematic books can be trusted to give a complete overview of Sadra's mature thought. The tradition of oral teaching and commentary in Iran has from an early point focused on four or five of these basic texts: all of them, including *The Wisdom of the Throne*, share a common philosophic structure, which is discussed in the following section.

By far the longest of these comprehensive works is what is commonly known as the *Asfār*: its full title is *al-Ḥikma al-Muta'āliya fī al-Asfār al-Arba'a al-'Aqlīya* ("The Transcendent Wisdom in the Four Noetic Journeys").[60] In the *Asfār*, Sadra drew together what he considered the relevant materials and topics from all the theoretical traditions discussed in Chapter III, attempting to show how, at each point, they either converged on or failed to recognize that "transcendent Wisdom," or reality of Being, which he saw as the ultimate Ground and object of both philosophy and theology. Although his intentions in the *Asfār* were in no way merely historical, he does quote literally hundreds of pages from earlier writers such as Avicenna and Ibn Arabi. This largely accounts for the vast extent of the *Asfār*—some fifty times longer than *The Wisdom of the Throne*—and the obvious need for shorter works giving a more direct insight into those primary intentions.

The most important of those intermediate systematic texts is a book called *al-Shawāhid al-Rubūbīya fī al-Manāhij al-Sulūkīya* ("The Divine Witnesses Concerning the Stages of the Way"), more commonly known simply as the *Shawāhid*. In this work, roughly one-tenth the size of the *Asfār*, it is much easier to grasp the essential order and interconnections of the topics treated in such

60 For an outline of its structure and the significance of the title, see Nasr, *Ṣadr al-Dīn*, pp. 55-68. F. Rahman's *The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā* paraphrases some of its contents as seen from a fairly doctrinaire Avicennan and theological perspective.

great detail in the longer book. Still another intermediate summary, *al-Mabda' wa al-Ma'ād* ("The Origin and the Return": cf. section B below), deals with many of the same subjects, only with relative emphasis on the more popularly accessible religious and theological vocabulary, rather than the technical Avicennan language of the *Shawāhid*: it was commonly used as an introductory teaching text.

The Wisdom of the Throne (*al-Ḥikma al-'Arshīya*, commonly known as the *'Arshīya*) represents a final extreme level of compression and allusiveness. Its relation to those longer texts will be discussed in more detail in section C below, after considering the underlying structure that unites all of these systematic works. Here it is sufficient to state that the *'Arshīya* is by no means a simple abridgment (although in many places it is virtually incomprehensible without reference to those longer works), nor is it by any means a relatively popular or exoteric work. To summarize, it is the one book, more than any other, in which Sadra simply says what he really means.

B. The Common Structure

All of Sadra's comprehensive works, including *The Wisdom of the Throne*, are divided into two parts, which may be called the "Origin" (*al-mabda'*: the *archē*) and the "Return" (*al-ma'ād*).[61] The subjects of these two parts are further treated in both a philosophic and a religious context, which may be considered in relative separation (giving the four parts of the *Asfār*) or in combination, as is the case to a great extent in *The Wisdom of the Throne*. In the broadest possible sense, the first of these parts is an inquiry into the nature of Being (the justification of the capital letter will become apparent) and the universal order of reality; in religious terms, the same insight is expressed as a theology and cosmogony, an account

[61] Sadra uses a great many different terms, both religious and philosophic (cf. his Prologue here), to express this distinction. Its immediate philosophic background is in Avicenna (in the structure of the metaphysics of the *Shifā'*) and his successors, and before that, earlier Neoplatonic writers. What is essential here is the awareness of the universality of the ontological situation (and human reality) to which all these expressions refer: cf. the discussions in Chapters V and VI.

of God's creative relation to that order of being. The second part begins with an inquiry into the nature and ultimate reality of the soul, or "Man" (*al-insān*) as that Consciousness in which the order of the cosmos is manifested and (potentially) mirrored; that subject is related to eschatology, the prophetic accounts of man's judgment and ultimate destiny.

Finally, as Sadra very pointedly indicates in the last sentences of *The Wisdom of the Throne*, there is a "third" part, the continuation and realization of man's Return, which takes place in the order of the communities established by the prophets and maintained by their interpreters, the "imams." That is the actual situation out of which these discussions emerge and to which they always refer. This dimension of man's "Return" is not something discovered by Sadra, but rather very much assumed by the different traditions in which he was working.[62] It has to do with seeing all these parts as one whole—above all, with grasping the essential inner relation of the philosophic and theological accounts. The meaning of this unifying dimension is not something that can actually be stated or believed, any more than with the similarly problematic homology of psyche, cosmos, and polity in Plato's works. Above all, it requires asking, at each step of Sadra's exposition, "*Why* is he doing this now?"

It may be helpful, though, to suggest that *The Wisdom of the Throne*—like the works it summarizes—was intended to be read on essentially three successive levels. On the first of those levels, a flat plane that requires little effort, it can be read as defending certain forms of belief or images about the world—about God, creation, and the afterlife, or certain no less rigidly conceived metaphysical doctrines—that readers would bring to it, or discover there. At a second stage, it is like the ascent of a long ladder, opening up many problems and paths of inquiry that seem to converge on a level of meaning very different from—perhaps even contradicting—those beliefs with which the reader first began. At points along that ascent, looking up or down, one may feel either a dizzying confusion or a giddy (and illusory) sense of vast superiority and achievement. Sadra has his devices for safely carrying readers past those dangers.

Finally, having climbed up beyond the ladder, there is a point at which one discovers that those first beliefs were not really

[62] See the references in Chapter III-B, C, and E.

"wrong" (or ultimately replaceable) after all—because the ladder, paradoxically, has led back to where one first began. At that point, which is where Sadra leaves his readers, they can begin to see clearly —"with both lights"—why the prophets brought down with them what they did.

C. The Wisdom of the Throne

The Wisdom of the Throne, to continue our image, begins at the top of that ladder, assuming a reader who is already deeply aware of the inner reality of transcendence or Being—which is what the divine "Throne" (*'arsh*) of the title refers to—and of the many problems that arise in attempting to integrate the experience of that order with the more familiar forms of our existence. Sadra's essential presuppositions in this work, which distinguish it from all his other systematic books, are clearly stated at the end of his Prologue: it is aimed at those with the "properly refined natural disposition" who are able to grasp his intentions by means of "subtle allusions," without recourse to the extended arguments of his longer works. This feature makes *The Wisdom of the Throne* potentially much more accessible—and useful—for modern readers unacquainted with the complex theoretical disciplines and traditions in which those arguments were embedded. This book is clearly focused on the truly universal dimensions of the problem of transcendence.

At the same time, it must be stressed that Sadra's approach here does not at all eliminate the necessity and specific functions of these complex historical traditions and forms of argument. In fact, as one quickly discovers in the opening chapter, he actually presumes a considerable acquaintance with those traditions and his creative use of them in his longer works. What *The Wisdom of the Throne* gives—and largely assumes—is the *key* to the unifying intention of all those other writings: that is, that mature stage of experience and reflection on the question of transcendence which not only reveals the recurrent intellectual dilemmas generating the formulae and approaches of the systematic works,[63] but which is also fully able to

[63] This relation can be clearly seen in the actual structure of the *Asfār* and the other long systematic works. They consist of long discussions, from the perspective of several theoretical traditions, of often seemingly disparate topics

relate those guiding concerns back into the concrete human reality and full historical setting in which they arise and in which they are ultimately manifested. In Sadra's world, that more comprehensive dimension of realization was necessarily posed in terms of the symbols of Islamic faith and the role of the Prophet, who has established those symbols, and the Imam (the "leader" or "guide," or his representatives) who must interpret and apply them in the present.

From that perspective, then, *The Wisdom of the Throne* is not simply about discovering who the imam, or true philosopher, really is. That is only a first step. Beyond that, it is about his return to the larger community and to the sort of activity and teaching that is appropriate to that context. That is why, in comparison to Sadra's longer systematic works, the religious and philosophic vocabulary here is far more intricately and explicitly connected, and the discussions of the Return (Part II) and the full meaning of eschatology are much less condensed than are the ontological and theological sections (Part I). This is also why, from another perspective, *The Wisdom of the Throne* can appear at the same time as a more public work, pointing to those emphases and forms of interpretation (especially concerning the key symbols of Shiite belief) that were of the most immediate political significance in Sadra's own historical circumstances.[64] In this way, it also indicates the essential

whose inner connections or order and unity may be quite mysterious: those discussions suddenly culminate in or are interrupted by a brief passage (sometimes a single sentence) alluding to that aspect of the experience of transcendence which at the same time generates and—properly understood—resolves the difficulty to which the preceding arguments all referred. These key sections are variously denominated as *'arshī, kashfī, mashriqī, ladunnī,* and so on, just as in the title and key chapter headings of this book. All of those terms indicate the decisive realization of enlightenment or the "unveiling" of Being: the *'Arshīya* alone openly *begins* with those critical insights. (Cf. Chapters IV-C and V-A.)

[64] In *The Wisdom of the Throne,* this exoteric dimension is evident above all in the continuous suppression of explicit positive references to the central influence of Sufism and Ibn Arabi's scriptural interpretations, which were widely considered as dangerously heretical, irredeemably Sunni, or both (cf. n. 51); and in the corresponding effort to express those same essential insights in Shiite terminology and tradition. This emphasis, already evident in Sadra's Prologue, is especially marked in Part II-C; cf. the footnotes to that section. The *Asfār* and other longer systematic works, intended only for a more sophisticated

bond of intention uniting his philosophic writings and his scriptural commentaries and more openly polemical works.

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and sympathetic audience, make no such attempt to conceal Sadra's massive debt to Ibn Arabi and to Sufi writing and practice more generally. This should not be taken to suggest that Sadra foisted an alien meaning on the sayings of the early Imams (although that was the opinion of Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī: cf. nn. 52 and 55 above). The similarity of point of view has to do partly with historical connections between Sufism and early Shiite esotericism, and much more fundamentally with the nature of the reality (and common symbols) with which both were centrally concerned.

CHAPTER V

The "Origin": A Logic of Transcendence

The preceding chapters, together with the additional references and explanations in the notes to the translation, should be sufficient orientation for reading *The Wisdom of the Throne* or any of Sadra's other works. The main difficulty at this point, for most readers, is likely to be making the connection between the profusion of Sadra's often unfamiliar technical vocabulary and historical allusions and the more universal problems and concerns that underlie them: it may be difficult to see the forest for the trees. These last two chapters are designed to point out the larger outlines of the work as a whole and the philosophic context of the problems Sadra treats in each section. They are in no way intended as a commentary: an adequate discussion of Sadra's writings on the relations of Being and quiddity (cf. V-B below), for example, would by itself require a volume as long as this one.

What is indispensable, in any case, is the inner connection between Sadra's reflections and the actual manifestations of those problems in each reader's personal experience. An important step in making that connection is recognizing analogous treatments of the same basic issues in other philosophic and spiritual traditions; these chapters may prove useful in that respect.

A. The Starting Point

The Wisdom of the Throne begins with the situation outlined in Chapter II, with the problematic contrast between what we have called the condition of "transcendence"—what Sadra, in his Prologue, begins by referring to as the enlightened state of "true inner knowledge (*ma'rifa*) and certainty"—and our more familiar ways of experiencing and describing the world. Each section of the book is concerned with clarifying some aspect of the relation between those two fundamentally different conditions of being. Mulla Sadra

describes their relation from many perspectives and by many names.[65] The essential point is that all of the conceptual distinctions he introduces refer back to that single problematic reality which each reader must himself bring to the book. *The Wisdom of the Throne* is about the further rational discernment and integration of these two dimensions of man's being, not about supplying the experiential premises. But if one is not constantly mindful of them, Sadra's analyses quickly appear as a sort of pretentious logical wordplay. More importantly, his "proofs" and "conclusions" lie in the same domain as those premises. This book, whose subject is precisely what is always beyond (and before) belief, in no way culminates in some new belief or doctrine.

Its subject is the divine "Throne," the inner reality of Being revealed—and expressed—in the condition of transcendence.[66] The two Parts of the book correspond to the two intimately connected meanings that the original Arabic expression *(al-'arsh)* conveyed to Sadra's readers. The "Throne" was at once the empyrean, the incorporeal dimension of reality lying "beyond" (that is, in no place) and encompassing the material cosmos, and at the same time the noetic "heart" *(qalb)* or innermost reality of man.[67] In the language of

[65] Some of the most important of these are the contrasts between true faith and formal belief *(īmān/islām)*, true inner knowing and conceptual "knowledge" *(ma'rifa/'ilm)*, the fully human being and the mortal human animal *(insān/bashar)*, this world and the other world *(al-dunyā/al-ākhira)*, Being and "existents" *(wujūd/mawjūdāt)*, and the Truly Real and His creation *(Ḥaqq/khalq)*. The significance of all of these is best understood through close attention to the contexts in which they actually arise.

[66] That is, in the *ma'rifa* of the "true knower" (the *'ārif)*. So that the following discussions do not become impossibly cluttered, I have used as much as possible a very limited set of Arabic terms and rough English equivalents. Capitals are used for Sadra's many technical references to Being *(wujūd)* understood as the ultimate Whole or comprehensive noetic dimension of reality. In most cases, these terms do correspond to theological expressions for the Divinity, although it must be admitted that the distinction between the divine and nondivine is always essentially one of inner perspective in Sadra's thought, given his ontology of divine Self-manifestation and the fundamental ambivalence of Being underlying that conception.

[67] The latter meaning followed from famous Prophetic sayings to the effect that God's Throne or "House" was "the heart of the man of true faith" *(qalb al-mu'min)*: cf. Part II-C, §11, at n. 259. As the divine Intellect or Nous *('aql)*, the first meaning of the Throne was therefore also the same as the other word of the title, the divine "Wisdom" *(al-ḥikma*: see n. 40 above).

the philosophers, both meanings referred to aspects of the divine Intelligence or Nous (*'aql*).[68] Part I approaches that reality from the side of Being, as it is related to man's knowledge of the cosmos and the intrinsic order of the physical world. Part II approaches the same reality from the side of the soul, from the living experience of each human being, in relation to the ultimate noetic Ground of the psychic (and ethical) dimension of man's being. What unites both parts, and the two meanings of the "Throne," is the actual experience of the reality of transcendence (*ma'rifa, īmān,* etc.), which alone can reveal the secret union of the human "heart," or noetic Self, and all Being.[69]

The Wisdom of the Throne, though, is concerned not with that experience in itself—which it assumes at the start—but with the further essential integration of that perspective with our more familiar ways of encountering the world. Above all, it aims at clarifying the grounds of those inevitable ethical and intellectual confusions that can lead to dangerous misinterpretations of either the symbols or the actual experience of transcendence as essentially "irrational" or otherwise beyond human access.[70] Negatively speaking, then, Sadra's philosophic effort could be characterized as attempting to show what *ma'rifa,* this revelatory awareness of transcendence, is *not*: it is not knowledge of any particular physical reality (Part I), nor does it have to do essentially with any particu-

68 Where possible, I have usually translated the forms of this key Arabic term as "Nous," "noetic," and so on, since those expressions have far fewer misleading English connotations than such common translations as "Intellect," "mind," and so on. For the essential equivalency of this term and Being, see the discussions in Section B-3 below, on the Unity of Being and Consciousness.

69 The whole work is thus an extended commentary on the famous saying of the Imam Ali: "He who truly knows (*'arafa*) his soul/Self (*nafsahu*), knows his Lord." This is why Sadra indicates (Part II-A, §1) that *ma'rifat al-nafs*—the inner awareness of the reality of soul as the noetic Self or Being—is the key to man's Return to the realization of his true nature. The formula refers to this ever-present ontological reality, not to anything else the formula "self-knowledge" might suggest; cf. the further discussions in Chapter VI-A.

70 In Sadra's own historical situation, as outlined in Chapter III, the historical manifestations of these sorts of misunderstandings that most concerned him were, first, the denial of the many forms of immediate human access to the realization of this dimension (that is, among many Shiite *'ulamā'* and, to a certain extent, some Avicennan philosophers); and second, a host of shortsightedly gnostic and sectarian interpretations among diverse Sufi and esoteric Shiite groups.

lar new psychic contents or special powers (Parts II-A and II-B). Since it cannot be described at all as an object or in any of the other linguistic categories appropriate to our usual dualistic (subject-object) perception of particular things, it is not surprising that allusions to this state often appear as a paradoxical sort of "ignorance" (as in Socrates) or a series of deliberate negations or apparent contradictions.[71]

More positively, what Sadra is attempting to point to is the reality of transcendence understood as the ultimate context of the human situation, as what "man" is both actually or ultimately (as *insān*) and merely potentially (as *bashar*, the mortal human animal). From this perspective, the experience of transcendence is seen as revealing not any particular knowledge of physical or psychic realities, but rather the noetic Source of the intelligible and meaningful order underlying our experience in all those realms. And most importantly, on the ethical and political side, it reveals no particular formula of right belief or external prescription for behavior, but rather the always present moral unity of the human community. This Ground (*aṣl*) or Being that Sadra discusses at such length could be likened to a sort of invisible background that we do not ordinarily see because it is everywhere[72]—because we see *with* it—and ultimately, because we *are* it, that One Subject-Object which the Sufis called Love (*'ishq*).[73] The paradoxical distance between those two points, between man as *insān* and as *bashar*, corresponds to the inherent ambiguity in the other Arabic term of the

[71] This is why, too, Sadra's philosophic concepts always lead back to the original Koranic symbols they are explaining: the interpretation can only *mediate* between what we ordinarily call knowledge or belief and that experienced reality of transcendence to which the symbols refer. The symbol, in that original context, always remains irreducible.

[72] Cf. the description of the paradoxical "invisibility" of noetic Being at Part I, §4, n. 29: there were a multitude of related images for this essential paradox in Sufi poetry (the sea and the waves, etc.). For Sadra, as for Suhrawardi and "knowers" in many other traditions, the fundamental image of this reality remains Light (*al-nūr*); cf. the complex uses of that imagery within the Prologue alone.

[73] Sadra's philosophical expression for this dynamic Self-manifestation of Being is its eternal "transubstantiation" (*ḥaraka jawharīya*: cf. Chapters V-B-4 and VI-A). His favorite symbolic expression for it is the unfolding divine Compassion or Mercy (*raḥma*), although he is well aware of its equivalence with the Love of the Sufi poets—as were all his readers.

title. *Ḥikma* here is both divine "Wisdom," or the noetic Whole of Being, and "philosophy," the ongoing drama (the "divine comedy") of realization played out within that stage. This book is about discovering (or rather, remembering) who the author of that drama, and the actors, truly are.[74]

B. Ontology and Theology

The Wisdom of the Throne begins with the fundamental distinction between the condition of *ma'rifa*, or the enlightened inner knowing of transcendence, and our more usual forms of knowledge and belief. Part I, then, is an account—or ultimately, an inquiry into—the structure of reality (what Sadra calls Being, *al-wujūd*) within which those two very different types of consciousness are both possible and real. Actually, there are several such accounts: there is the relevant theological symbolism of the Koran, the explanation of that in terms of kalam theology, Ibn Arabi's more direct descriptions (again using mainly scriptural symbols) of the experience of transcendence, and Sadra's own adaptations and analyses of Ibn Arabi's insights in language drawn from the Avicennan metaphysical tradition.

What Sadra is ultimately attempting to do in all of these cases is to direct his readers' attention beyond these often apparently conflicting languages, back to that common reality and form of experience to which they all refer. There are two ways of doing that: by using direct symbolic allusions to the actual reality and experience of transcendence, or by attempting to articulate discursively and conceptually the actual nature of the *difference* between the two standpoints in question, so that those more symbolic expressions are not mistakenly treated as references to our usual kinds of perception. Neither of these forms of expression is at all properly meaningful if the reader does not have some sense both of the problems

[74] The central Koranic image of that transhistorical situation, a leitmotif Sadra has woven through all of Part II (on man's "Return" to his true Self), is the story of the pre-eternal "Covenant" between God and all the descendants of Adam (cf. Part I-A, §8): from that perspective, the prophetic role, in all of its manifestations, is essentially one of awakening the inner mindfulness or "remembrance" (*dhikr*) of man's true dignity, a movement of the soul that is possible at every instant.

(both theoretical and practical) posed by these two distinct levels of awareness and of the direction in which resolution is to be sought. Worse than that, such expressions lend themselves to a variety of serious misunderstandings that could be dangerous either to their writer (at least in Sadra's time) or to the unqualified reader and those around him. Recognizing that danger, Sadra placed all of the discussions of Part I (and the rest of this book as well) in a superficially dogmatic and unexceptionable theological framework, which is outlined in section B-1 below. And he opens with chapters so technical in form and apparently so dry and humanly insignificant in meaning that only the truly qualified reader would be tempted to continue.

As part of that qualification, Part I (and the rest of the book) seems to assume not only the experiential premises Sadra mentions in the Prologue, but also a considerable acquaintance with Sadra's other philosophic works and with the vocabulary and underlying approach of Ibn Arabi. All the chapters of Part I allude to certain recurrent problems in any attempt to describe the structure of Being underlying the experience of transcendence. Sadra's own philosophic attempts to clarify those issues—usually as they had arisen in disputes concerning paradoxical formulae for the insights of Ibn Arabi and other Sufis (for instance, the "Unity of Being," *waḥdat al-wujūd*)—take up hundreds of pages in the *Asfār* and other longer works. Here we cannot begin to summarize those contributions and their essential historical background.[75] Sections 2-4 below are only intended to show the basic issues underlying the discussions in Part I and to outline the essential ontological structure and vocabulary that Sadra goes on to use throughout the rest of the book.

1. *The theological framework.* Outwardly, the titles and successions of topics in Part I follow a classic order of exposition taken over from earlier kalam theology. It begins with the question of God's existence and Unity (*tawḥīd*), then takes up the question of

[75] The best accessible summary or Sadra's ontology, which was the classic introductory textbook on that subject in Iran, is his *Mashā'ir* (translated by H. Corbin, "Livre des pénétrations métaphysiques"). A more complete outline is also given in *The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī*, translated by Izutsu and Mohaghegh. Essential explanations and historical references are given in the notes to the translation below.

the inner relation of His Essence and Attributes (or "Names"), and finally examines the expression of those Attributes in His creation of the world. Sadra says nothing that would openly contradict the popular conception of those questions on the level of dogmatic belief. In fact, he seems to follow a prudent path between the excesses of the Ash'arite and Mu'tazilite kalam schools (Part I, §§5-11), and —unlike the notorious opinions of certain philosophers—he appears to defend both God's real knowledge of particular individuals (§7) and His temporal creation of the whole world (§§12-16).

On another level, the discussions of Part I take up the question of the inner relation of God and Man from a perspective that is only meaningful in light of the actual experience of transcendence. Principles §§1-4 consider the paradoxical Unity and Simplicity or inner structure of reality (Being) as it is revealed in that condition. The following principles (§§5-11) discuss the inner union of Being and noetic Consciousness (*'aql*)—which is the point uniting the two meanings of the divine "Throne" in the title—and the implications of that union for the intelligible order of the world. And finally, the concluding principles (§§12-16) describe the ongoing "transubstantiation" or dynamic inner transformation of all determinate beings in relation to their noetic Ground.[76]

2. *The reality of Being.* Sadra's fundamental distinction of "being" (*al-wujūd*) and "quiddity" in the opening chapter of Part I corresponds to those two basic dimensions of awareness that are his starting point—*ma'rifa,* or the condition of the inner "unveiling" of transcendence; and the inner standpoint of all our ordinary experience (whether it be what we call knowledge, belief, or perception). Being only becomes a *problem,* in the universal and very immediate sense it has in Sadra's philosophy, when it is viewed from this transformed perspective. Only when "seeing things as they really are" means something essentially different from our usual "seeing" does one become aware of problematically different "lev-

[76] In Part I, Sadra openly concentrates on the physical or outer cosmological aspect of that universal process, although he does make the essential point that it applies equally to psychic reality (§§14-15) and even to the purely intelligible aspects of Being (§§9 and 11), the "Forms," "Realities," or divine "Names."

The essential human dimensions of this aspect of Being are the subject of all of Part II: cf. the discussion in Chapter VI-A below.

els" or degrees of being. Otherwise, the term "being" can only appear as the most general and vaguest of concepts, as it was for those philosophers whom Sadra criticizes in Part I, §4.

Sadra's ontological vocabulary reflects these two essential standpoints in our perception of the world—and at the same time, it attempts to clarify the way they are actually related. Perhaps the nature of that distinction (and the integration it also presupposes) is most clearly visible in our perception of other persons.[77] In this context, "quiddities" (the Arabic *māhīya*: literally, "what it is to be") refer in the most inclusive sense to all those mental conceptions, paradigms, expectations, beliefs, points of view (*i'tibārāt*)—only the smallest part of which are ever subject to conscious conceptual elaboration—through which we ordinarily view the world. They make up those very selective lenses through which our experience is refracted. Most importantly, that ongoing mental delimitation of reality is intimately attached to a particular quiddity of the "self" or knowing subject, which is usually closely connected (in that mental self-conception) with a particular body and complex images (that is, memories) of "its" history.[78] Reality at that level, as we ordinarily experience it, appears to consist of discrete, independently describable objects or "existents" (*mawjūdāt*).

Now it should be obvious (from observing an infant, for example) how much our continuing social and physical existence remains dependent at all times on the most careful attention to that elaborate, constantly shifting order of quiddities on the level of "mental being" (*wujūd dhihnī*). For the most part, what we call "experience" proceeds at that level. But on the other hand, we are at other times also intensely aware of a much deeper, ultimate level of rela-

[77] The example given here is solely for illustrative purposes; the reality in question is just as operative in any area of experience. What is indispensable here, in any case, is the actual individual awareness discussed in Chapter II.

[78] All of Part II is concerned with analyzing the sources of this mentally created and sustained (and quite indispensable) illusion of the self as a mental object, or "idol," in religious language. Sadra's ultimate intention there, it should be stressed, is not the construction of a more adequate psychology or epistemology (although his insights are important for those ends), but rather in awakening each reader's awareness of the larger reality (the "Self" or Being) always underlying this situation and of the concrete moral possibilities and obligations that fuller awareness actually reveals. See the discussions of Part II in Chapter VI.

tionship, identity, and true communion at which that whole mental framework and fundamental separation of existents (including "subjects") it presumes is seen to be essentially relative or (from this inclusive viewpoint) "illusory," like the rules of a game or the conventions of a drama. The essential fact is that this last, ordinarily invisible dimension of reality always *includes* and sustains (rather than changing or precluding) the level on which we ordinarily perform as discrete individuals, personalities, and so on. In fact, it is not really another "thing" or quiddity, another object of experience or "event" occurring in time, but rather an entirely different level of identity and *actual* understanding that is always there, as the context underlying and generating the play of personal differences and disagreements. What Sadra's discussions in Part I are pointing to—and we must stress that any illustration such as this can convey only the most partial aspect of that reality—is the full, truly universal and all-encompassing scope of that noetic Being, at the level of implicit and absolute Unity always underlying and making possible the infinite surface play of real (and intrinsically relative) differentiation and intelligible form.

The rest of Part I goes on to examine some of the most general features of this paradoxical Whole that Sadra calls "Being." First (§§1-4), he indicates that Being must be both "One" or Simple (in an absolute sense encompassing all multiplicity and determination), and yet be manifested simultaneously (although that term, too, is inexact) in the infinity of relations within that Whole. That relationship is inherently paradoxical, in the sense that our usual mental categories of time and spatial relationship cannot begin to grasp it: the Whole is wholly and timelessly present in *each* of Its "manifestations." (That reality, which cannot be imagined or believed, is the "transubstantiation" of all beings, described in Principles §§13-16.) Second, he must speak of several planes or "worlds" of Being (at a minimum, of this noetic Unity, and the levels of differentiation within It), since the Whole cannot be simply identified with any of Its determinate manifestations or aspects (*anḥā'*), whether they be physical (§§12-16), psychic (all of Part II), or even purely intelligible (§§5-11). And finally, Being stands in the most intimate yet problematic relation to man's consciousness and experience. The purely logical and conceptual treatment of the para-

doxes of transcendence quickly becomes bewildering and pointless if one loses sight of that central human connection: this account of transcendence in Part I grows out of and is intended to illuminate the reflection on its critical human dimensions in Part II.

With these central aspects of the problem of Being in mind, the functions of some of Sadra's key technical terms should become clearer; these basic expressions are used throughout *The Wisdom of the Throne*, and their sources and fundamental expressions are in the structures of human experience analyzed at length in Part II. First, in terms of our ordinary perception of the world, Being is conceived by the individual "mind" (*dhihn*) as consisting of certain complex "quiddities" or discrete, self-subsistent "existents" (*mawjūdāt*). Seen in Its true reality, from the transcendent perspective of enlightened "true inner knowing" (*ma'rifa*, etc.), the same field of phenomena is perceived as a constantly flowing emergence of "beings" (*wujūdāt*) or "manifestations" (*maẓāhir*) and theophanies (*tajalliyāt*) of Being, differing in relative "intensity" and "comprehensiveness." Within Being as a whole, moreover, it is necessary to distinguish three primary levels or ontological "modalities" (*nash'āt*) of manifestation, the physical, psychic, and purely intelligible or noetic (*'aqlī*) realms.[79] The timeless dynamic interrelation of the comprehensive noetic dimension of Being and Its particular manifestations, both psychic and physical, is discussed in philosophical language as the "transubstantiation" of all beings.[80] That uni-

[79] It should be added that Sadra uses a great many other terms (especially ones taken over from Ibn Arabi's complex ontological symbolism) to express these same distinctions. In particular, he quite often merges the psychic and noetic realms and speaks of them jointly as "incorporeal" being, whenever he is using the Koranic this world/other world (*dunyā/ākhira*) language in Part II. These different usages are explained in the notes as they arise.

[80] Cf. Section B-4 below. This reality, which Sadra describes from many different perspectives, has traditionally been referred to in commentaries on his philosophy as *ḥaraka jawharīya*, "motion (or change) in the category of substance." However, the reality Sadra is referring to does not have that directionality and cumulative temporal aspect which the words "motion" or "change" ordinarily convey. What he is pointing to can be most easily grasped at the deeper levels of psychic reality (Part II), in the constant flow of images, modes of perception, and shifting times actually constituting our experience there. The direct awareness of this reality in relation to what we usually perceive as the "solid" physical world (Part I, §§13-16) is a relatively rare experience of transcendence, although there are many notable poetic expressions of that stage of awareness.

versal process is the inner reality and ground of both the eternal "creation" (I, §§12-16) of the phenomenal world and the "Return" or ongoing realization of man's true noetic nature (all of Part II).

3. *The Unity of Being and Consciousness.* The key to Sadra's philosophic use of theological vocabulary in Part I (and ultimately, in all of his writing) is the inner connection between his considerations of the Unity and Simplicity of Being in the opening chapters of Part I and the thesis of the noetic "Union of knower and known" in §10. It is no accident that the titles of those Principles (§§1, 2, and 10) are specially qualified—along among all the chapters of this work—as "from the Throne" (*'arshī*) or divine "Presence": this transcendent Unity of Being and Consciousness is what connects the two meanings of the divine "Throne" in the title of the book itself. The importance of this point for Sadra's philosophy can hardly be exaggerated: such central issues as his understanding of the prophets and imams—or of philosophy and human perfection more generally—flow from this insight. But its significance in this theological context (that is, the relation of the divine Essence and Attributes, §§5-11) only becomes apparent when it is compared with the theological schemas he was actually opposing.

What Sadra is arguing against in these chapters is a certain line of negative theology that approached the question of the divine Essence (or "Being," in his philosophic language) simply by negating all humanly knowable characteristics. (In philosophic language, that sort of radical separation of the human and divine was sometimes expressed by speaking of a "creation" of the "First Intellect," or intelligible Principle of the natural human and cosmic order, by an unknowable One.) In Sadra's view, that theological formulation —in itself ambiguous and potentially useful—had often been seriously abused by two different interpretations. On a more popular plane, it had frequently been allied with the notion of an arbitrary, ordinarily inaccessible God adopted by many forms of theology (including the kalam schools) to justify their assertion of particular exclusive historical revelations—most often assumed to take the form of a detailed religious Law and prescriptions (whether of belief or action) that man must simply obey. In that context, the eschatological promises and threats regarding that special revelation

were similarly taken to be literally true (whatever "literal" might mean in such a case), since the observable orders of earthly things might well have nothing at all in common with that unknowable higher Reality.

On a second level, a similar form of negative theology had often been adopted to express what Sadra would acknowledge as a genuine experience of transcendence, only mistakenly interpreted in terms of its limited outward form or occasion of appearance (that is, as "knowledge"), so that the universal reality and its deeper implications were again obscured and replaced by the dangerous and obscurantist belief in a uniquely privileged divine intervention. On that level, this sort of negative theology (or rather its misinterpretation) was historically influential both in certain sectarian Shiite circles and among other mystical groups, including some commentators of Ibn Arabi.[81] The dangerous ethical conclusions that could be drawn from such an abortive and inadequate understanding of the reality of transcendence—that is, quietism, antinomianism, and messianism in their many forms—were familiar and unavoidable issues for Sadra and all of his readers.

In contrast, it should be noted that Sadra's own approach to the unifying noetic dimension of Being (§§1-4) proceeds through the radical *inclusion* of absolutely all phenomena and formal distinctions. Being, or the Whole, cannot be characterized simply by any combination of those relative distinctions, and is therefore ultimately neither (simply) material nor psychic in nature: instead, it does have precisely the nature of consciousness (or Nous: *'aql*), the comprehensive noetic modality that encompasses all the forms of Being. What this means, quite concretely, is that the "knowing" of Being, or the enlightened inner awareness of transcendence, cannot by itself be identified with any particular *form* of knowledge, belief,

[81] This point of theology is, for example, the central issue in Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī's bitter attacks on Mulla Sadra—and on philosophy and Sufism in general—in his commentaries on the *'Arshīya* and the *Mashā'ir*: cf. Chapter III-F, nn. 52 and 55 above. As indicated there, these attacks are representative of a longer line of exclusivist "gnostic" interpretations of the Imams, going back at least to early Ismaili theologies. Again, it should be stressed that Sadra's argument is not so much with the forms of expression common to those mystical groups, but with the sectarian and obscurantist interpretations to which they readily lend themselves.

or experience: it reveals only that Ground—what Sadra, following Ibn Arabi (cf. §9), often calls the divine "Mercy" or universal Compassion (*raḥma*)—which actually unites all beings, not anything that would separate them. The "fully human being" (*al-insān al-kāmil*) is therefore simply the one who truly loves others as himself, because he actually *knows* (that is, as *ma'rifa*, not *'ilm*) that they are the same Self.

That is why Sadra's careful analyses of the Unity and Simplicity of Being in the opening chapters conclude with such curiously impassioned assertions that God's Knowledge is "knowledge of all things in every respect." Being, as realized from the standpoint of the "true knower" (the *'ārif*) is the pure Subject/Object, the Ground and guarantor both of the intelligibility of the world and of the implicit meaningfulness and ultimate moral unity underlying human activity. Such concepts, it must be stressed, are meaningless if taken as beliefs or theological postulates, apart from the particular concrete human actions that at once "verify" them and "make them real"—the two sides of what Sadra calls *taḥqīq* or "realization" (cf. Chapter II). This aspect of universality and immediate human accessibility is the fundamental issue separating Sadra's approach from the theologies he is attempting to correct. The understanding of revelation and prophethood that corresponds to his view is set forth briefly in Principle §8, in expressions largely adopted from Ibn Arabi.

Finally, it should again be stressed that this key postulate of the "union of knower and known" (§10), or the ultimate identity of Being and consciousness, is a purely ontological statement—about the Reality that actually *constitutes* all phenomena and forms of human experience—and not an epistemological theory or account of what we ordinarily call either "knowledge" or false belief. Indeed, one of Sadra's primary aims in Part I is to make it clear that *ma'rifa* or the condition of enlightenment, the divine "knowing" in which the usual illusion of separation between the subject and object disappears, does not have to do with any particular new object of "knowledge" in the ordinary senses of that term. The difference between these two states is very real, but it does not yield knowledge (*'ilm*) that can be directly taught.[82] In fact, this sort of

[82] That conclusion was of considerable immediate importance in light of the practical significance of the theological formula (or problem) of "knowing the

absolute "knowing" (*ma'rifa*) is far more likely to appear as worldly ignorance or even unbelief. That last possibility—whose consequences were as familiar to Sadra as to Plato—has a great deal to do with Sadra's careful attention to the level of popular, doctrinal understanding of this work and of religious teaching more generally.

4. *The transubstantiation of Being.* Formally, Principles §§12-16 deal with the modes of God's creative Activity in relation to the world; the various philosophic and theological conceptions of that reality are outlined in §12. More substantively, however, Principles §§13-16 are primarily concerned with Sadra's account of that aspect of the experience of transcendence which Ibn Arabi and many other Sufis had described as *tajalliyāt,* the direct perception of the inner reality of Being in the infinite procession of theophanies or Self-manifestations that constitute the world.[83] Sadra himself describes this universal process, which is directly experienced in the state of transcendent knowing, as the "transubstantiation" of all beings (*ḥaraka jawharīya*).[84] It is the inner dynamic relation between the universal noetic plane of Being and the forms of manifestation continually emerging within that Whole. As Sadra stresses at the end of §13 (and already in §§9 and 11), this relation includes in a sense even the purely intelligible Platonic Forms, the archetypal "Realities" (*ḥaqā'iq*) or divine "Names," and is actually only another integral aspect of the all-encompassing Unity and Simplicity of Being described in §§1-4.

Although Sadra apparently discusses this process of transubstantiation in Principles §§13-16 largely as it relates to the physical

imam" (or Prophet). At that historical level, it is the root of Sadra's passionate disagreement with those Shiite clerics who understood that "knowing" as referring to the outward form and personality of certain individuals, rather than their inner condition of being (cf. Chapter VI-B).

83 As Sadra indicates at the end of §12, all the other philosophic and theological accounts of the God-world (or Being-beings) relationship point to different aspects of this universal reality. This feature of the experience of transcendence had been described by Ibn Arabi and other Sufi writers using a vast range of poetic images: one of the most famous and appropriate of these was that of the "Breath of the Merciful" (*nafas al-raḥman*), which Sadra paraphrases in Part I, §9.

84 Cf. Chapter VI-A and n. 80 above on this translation and the meaning of this Arabic expression, which has often been misunderstood.

cosmos, as a continually renewed "creation,"[85] he makes two significant philosophic points concerning this reality (and experience) that are central to his discussion of the progressive transformations of the human soul in Part II. The first of these (at the end of §13 and all of §§14-15) is that this dynamic process encompasses *all* determinate beings: the noetic Ground of Being and consciousness stands in this universal creative relationship to absolutely all phenomena, uniting both the physical and the psychic aspects of reality and human experience. Second, the sort of "essential causality" or direct existentiating relation to God that is revealed in this transcendent mode of perception only grounds the objective intelligible structure of Being as that is manifest in our more usual forms of perception; it in no way replaces or negates other familiar accounts of that structure (such as the fourfold Aristotelean causal schema). Specifically, Sadra here seems to assume the relative appropriateness of the Ptolemaic-Aristotelean cosmology, although—contrary to some interpretations of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*—he does not make the discovery of this ultimate, inclusive noetic order of Being dependent on those physical accounts. Rather, what dependency there is works in the other direction: the intelligible noetic order is what makes those physical accounts possible, as it underlies both the physical beings and the corresponding (though far more extensive) expanses of man's psychic modes of being. In Part II, Sadra exhibits a similar attitude toward the Avicennan psychology and Galenic physiology of his time: he is aware that those and other natural sciences are relative accounts of a limited range of phenomena, but the underlying order that *all* such accounts reflect—and the possibility and importance of its human perception—remain grounded in this unifying noetic dimension of Being.

In all of these discussions, Sadra is again pointing out that *ma'rifa*, the unique enlightened awareness of the transcendent aspect of man's being, is not to be confused with any of the ordinary forms of human knowledge or belief: it is no substitute, for exam-

[85] In those chapters (§§13-16), both this terminology of continually renewed "creation" (*khalq jadīd*) and the corresponding interpretation of a number of Koranic passages as allusions to this reality are taken over from Ibn 'Arabi. Part II-C includes many more Koranic verses that were understood by Ibn 'Arabi (and Sadra) as references to this direct experience of the dynamic inner reality of Being.

ple, for prudence and practical intelligence, or for rational inquiry into the many particular intelligible orders of being. To confuse the two perspectives leads to a dangerous "blindness" in either realm. Philosophy and human perfection, he indicates, necessarily include both these domains of being and consciousness.

CHAPTER VI

The "Return": Dimensions of Realization

Part II of *The Wisdom of the Throne,* concerning man's Return (*al-ma'ād*) to his noetic Origin, is not primarily about adding to the ontological and theological theses outlined in Part I; on that level of a philosophic doctrine, there is relatively little that is not in fact a further working out of the essential insights into the transcendent Reality of Being that were summarized at the beginning. Instead, Part II is about that indispensable "verification" (*taḥqīq*) or further living proof of those ontological principles which is only possible through the direct and continuing realization of their actual manifestation in all experience.[86] That is why this section on the Return is so much longer: the eschatological symbols elaborated here, upon closer examination, turn out to be a sort of shorthand for that Being as it appears very differently in each reader's own experience and historical situation. The intricacies of Sadra's rhetoric here (especially in Part II-C) are designed to force the attentive reader to look deeply into the sources and full extent of those heavens and hells —both individual and collective, historical and transhistorical— in which his being is expressed and realized. That process is not something that ever comes to an end: the final chapters and the Concluding Testament open up onto the larger dimensions of that Return.

This Part, like the first, is intended to be read and understood at

[86] Of course, it is only in what one could call the "order of exposition" that these ontological postulates appear as something to be proven. Their appropriate role in the interplay of experience and understanding was outlined in Chapters II and III. Certainly what is primary, both in the order of being and in Sadra's own intentions, is the living realization—which will appear quite differently at every moment for each person—of the actual human potentialities these discussions may help to clarify or to reveal. The unity and universality of Sadra's work is only visible from that perspective, in light of what he would have called its "final cause."

three successive levels of participation (cf. IV-C above). There is, to begin with, a superficial stage at which Sadra's remarks accord with popular eschatological beliefs in a bodily, temporal resurrection. On this level, he even appears to contradict most previous philosophers in arguing explicitly for a bodily afterlife for all individuals.

Second, there is a level of more active philosophical inquiry that leads to the twofold inner meaning of spiritual "death" and rebirth, corresponding to the two fundamental dimensions of man's life and being: the soul as a complexly individuated, unfathomable psychic field of experience, and ultimately as the Self or generative noetic Ground of all manifestation (cf. IV-B-3 above), both psychic and physical. The inner relation between these two planes is that continual "change in substance" (*ḥaraka jawharīya*) that constitutes the manifold forms of human experience and activity. In II-C, Sadra gives an elaborate interpretation of Koranic eschatology understood in reference to these two universal planes of man's existence.

Finally, there is again the level of deeper reflection on the inner relation and ultimate necessity of both sides of the meaning of these Koranic symbols, inasmuch as they (and their counterparts in other communities) speak to equally essential aspects of man's being. As Sadra indicates in the closing chapters, that last stage is the point where one can begin to recognize who the prophet and imam really are.

The exoteric, most public level of meaning can again be summarized fairly quickly. Parts II-A and II-B outline an account of a "bodily resurrection" of each human individual in a "spiritual body" or psychic form that he creates in accordance with his essential character and inner habitual dispositions. That account is directed against both the absurdly literalist beliefs of the kalam theologians, on the one hand, and earlier philosophers' alleged denial of any meaningful individual resurrection, on the other. Sadra's own view is then elaborated in the form of an extended commentary on traditional Islamic eschatological beliefs. It begins with the shadowy life of souls immediately after the death of the body (II-B, §5), goes on to describe the "time" and "place" of the universal bodily Resurrection (II-C, §§1-6), the events of the Last Judgment (II-C, §§7-9), and the topography and nature of Paradise and Hell

(II-C, §§10-15).[87] The general tone of this account, read at this level of belief, is ethical and even moralizing, stressing the rewards awaiting the pious and those who do good and the punishments reserved for the evildoers and unbelievers. Again at this level, Sadra's corrections of both the literalist excesses of the kalam theologians and the short-sighted doubts of the philosophers appear to be designed to make popular belief in the eschatological promise and threat more plausible and hence more widely effective. The larger significance of this correction will be discussed below.

A. *Ma'rifat al-nafs*: Soul and Self

Mulla Sadra's most immediate philosophic intentions in Part II are twofold, corresponding to the two closely related meanings of the expression *ma'rifat al-nafs* ("true inner knowledge of the soul") in the title of II-A: it is both knowledge of the distinctive reality of soul, and the transcendent awareness of the true Subject, or noetic Self (cf. V-B-3), as that which is at once creating and experiencing both soul and the other determinate aspects of Being.[88] One set of

[87] Both the larger formal outlines of this account and its moralizing aspect (that is, the stress on physical rewards of good behavior and painful punishment of evil) correspond closely to the famous summaries of Islamic eschatological tradition by al-Ghazālī in the final book of his *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* and in the possibly apocryphal *Kitāb al-Durra al-Fākhira* (English translation by Jane Smith, *The Precious Pearl*). The latter book is a useful source for the popular understanding of many of the symbols Sadra discusses in Part II-C.

This sort of self-consciously ethicopolitical use and interpretation of popular eschatological belief was typical not only of al-Ghazālī, but of earlier Islamic philosophers in general. The very different "ontological" line of interpretation of eschatological symbolism in Part II-C is mainly derived from Ibn Arabi and earlier Sufism and esoteric Shiism; cf. Chapter VI-A.

[88] This last point is more specifically indicated in the titles of the corresponding sections of the *Asfār* and the *Shawāhid, fī tajarrud al-nafs* ("on the transcendence of the soul"), and in the famous saying of the Imam Ali to which this title also alludes: "he who knows his soul/Self, knows his Lord" (cf. n. 69 above). In a way, the movement from the first of these intentions to the second could be expressed as the movement from "the soul" (conceived as an isolated particular spatiotemporal subject of a specific limited set of events or experiences) to an awareness of "soul" as that universal reality within which that first sort of phenomenon appears. The decisive shift in perspective to which Sadra's arguments and concepts in Part II (as in Part I) all refer must always be kept in mind, since that experience is not something that can be thought

arguments (especially in II-B, and in major aspects of II-A) is therefore aimed at the clear recognition of "psychic" (or nonphysical) reality as a modality of being essentially different from elemental physical being; as the true domain of all human experience; and ultimately, as a modality of determinate manifestation encompassing all physical being, although itself of vastly greater extent. At the same time, though, Sadra is also anxious to show (in II-A, especially §§1 and 6-9, and almost all of II-C), that the true nature of this domain of being and experience can only be realized in light of the more fundamental recognition of its transcendent Source (that is, "Man" as the noetic Subject or Self). In other words, the true nature of soul can only be clearly grasped in light of the context outlined in Part I—that is, the transcendent Unity and transubstantiation of Being and consciousness.

The fundamental problem in these sections has to do with a recurrent danger along the paths of realization, one intimately connected with those ethical excesses and abortive forms of mystifying, "gnostic," and (in the broadest sense) sectarian conceptions of transcendence that Sadra is trying throughout to avoid. That problem is that a growing recognition of the autonomous reality and full extent of the psychic world (and the prospects and powers that discovery can reveal) is inextricably bound up with the inner realization of transcendence and the concomitant shift away from the illusion of the self as a limited "object" and particular spatiotemporal quiddity. Yet if that movement is not fully completed or closely controlled, the traveler can easily become lost in the pursuit of exotic sorts of experience and special powers in the service of selfish and quite unenlightened animal (or *basharī*) ends.[89] The fully human being (*insān*), Sadra indicates, is of a very different order.

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or imagined or believed, and the attempt to grasp it on that level leaves one with only a handful of pretentious words.

[89] The awareness of that constant danger was certainly not lacking in the writings of Ibn Arabi and other Sufis. But for the most part, those writings were directed to other Sufis within the framework of the orders, and could therefore take for granted the guiding and controlling function of those structures (the role of the master, customary disciplines, and so on). In contrast, Sadra's writings, as I mentioned in Chapter III, are mainly concerned with the different kinds of understanding (and misunderstanding) that are possible in the larger public setting, and with the kinds of rhetoric and teaching that are also appropriate for the community as a whole.

It is for this reason that Mulla Sadra, unlike Ibn Arabi and the other Sufis whose works he builds on throughout Part II, never emphasizes the dramatic perspectives opened up by his stress on the ontic autonomy of soul as an independent domain of being:[90] that was a prospect, he recognized, which each reader could in any case see only according to his own state and preparedness. But it is not simply that stress on the "paranormal" aspects of this reality could lead to the aimless pursuit of such powers and experiences for their own sake, although that always remains a real danger. More importantly, the use of such illustrations could easily distract attention from the full universality (and more immediate practical implications) of the recognition of the noetic nature of all experience, even including the most unexceptionable "normal" sense-perception (cf. II-A, §§2-6). Hence Sadra's guiding purpose throughout this section remains the deepening inner awareness (*ma'rifa*) of the ultimate relation of all psychic phenomena to that noetic dimension of Being which alone can provide the unifying vision necessary to order and direct these explorations. Once again, the inner awareness of transcendence does not imply or require "knowledge" of any particular psychic realities and powers, any more than it implies specific knowledge of any particular physical realities. The limitations of that condition—and the dangers of the approach to it—have much to do with Sadra's multifaceted interweaving of eschatological symbols in Part II. And that complicated and subtle approach, in turn, reflects his broader understanding of the nature and roles of the imam, prophet, and philosopher (see VI-B below).

On this philosophical level, then, the eschatological symbols interpreted throughout Part II (especially in II-C) have two entirely different meanings and terms of reference, corresponding to the psychic and the noetic dimensions of experience and being. In other words, there is one set (the "bodily" resurrection of II-A and II-B,

[90] In this regard, it is noteworthy that throughout Part II (and in his other works), Sadra continues to use the categories of Avicennan psychology and epistemology, even though that epistemology was originally focused almost entirely on the "logic" and "knowledge" appropriate to physical nature and based on an ontology that Sadra himself radically expands. See the discussion of Sadra's general attitude toward the Avicennan philosophic tradition in Chapter III-B and C.

or the "lesser Rising" in II-C) that is intended as a purely phenomenological description of the life of the soul as each of us ordinarily experiences it: that is, as either "heaven" or "hell," according to our subjective evaluations of that experience as either pleasurable or painful, "good" or "bad," as judged by our limited expectations, standards, desires, and habitual ways of acting and thinking. This understanding of eschatological symbolism in reference to the inner psychic state of the individual is closely related to the interpretations of earlier Islamic philosophers. And it operates on the same level of personal fear and hope as that public, ethical use of eschatological belief already mentioned—although the kinds of psychic activities and events that are decisive at this level of inner experience are in most cases infinitely more complex and subtle than those physical images and limited kinds of external actions that are ordinarily associated with the popular understanding of those symbols. These complex psychic phenomena, Sadra stresses, do not disappear in the condition of transcendence, since in fact they constitute the field of all possible "objects" of experience; it is only that they are seen differently, "as they really are." The enlightened "knower" (the *'ārif*) goes on having the same sort of sense perceptions, pleasures, pains, and emotional extremes as everyone else.

The second set of eschatological symbols and interpretations (in II-C) refer to what *is* different in the case of the "knower"—that is, to the condition of *ma'rifa* or the realized inner awareness of the noetic nature of all Being. Again, the decisive nature of that difference cannot be adequately conveyed in words: that is why, Sadra indicates, the revealed symbols of that insight are intentionally multivalent. For each reader must necessarily supply his own experience of the reality underlying those expressions, the ongoing realization (*taḥqīq*) that can alone make them both real and true. In any case, it is clear that the noetic, universal "Paradise" and the "Hell" of physical being to which this second group of symbols primarily refer are something very different from what those same terms are ordinarily taken to convey. "Paradise," in this comprehensive sense, is the same as the inner noetic reality of Being, with all experience perceived in its actual essential nature as theophany (*maẓāhir/tajalliyāt*). And it is evident that this condition of *ma'rifa* is quite com-

patible with extreme physical suffering—just as an unenlightened being remains in "hell" (from that noetic perspective) even in the midst of intense psychic or physical pleasure.

Now the lengthy and complex interweaving of symbols representing both of these perspectives and conditions of being in II-C (by itself almost as long as the rest of the book) is not an accident or some sort of rhetorical tour de force: what Sadra intends to accomplish there is something that cannot be summarized. True, the philosophic keys to those two meanings of the "afterlife" were given in Parts II-A/B and Part I, respectively. But in themselves, those conceptual analyses, however they may be expanded, can only illuminate the most general structure of that actual situation which necessarily appears quite differently in each reader's experience (cf. Chapter II). They are presented as tools of inquiry, not the spiritual work itself. Sadra's intention in Part II-C, by constantly and often paradoxically jumping back and forth between those two levels of reference, is to encourage his more thoughtful readers to inquire into the way those eschatological symbols (in *both* their essential dimensions) and the philosophic insights underlying them are actually expressed in corresponding forms of their own life.[91] That is a sort of reflection that can—and, Sadra implies, must—continue to proceed at ever deeper and more comprehensive levels. This concluding section is like a final confutation of that astute and well-educated reader who might still be tempted to reduce Sadra's philosophic intentions to any doctrine or set of beliefs, or to see this "Wisdom of the Throne" as something separable from the process of life in all its complexity. Thus it is no coincidence that this Part concludes (II-C, §§13, 14, 17) with extended discussions of the Imams and their successors as guides of the larger community—or

[91] Sadra's intentions in this section are very similar to those of Dante in the *Divine Comedy*, except that here all three dimensions of the human situation are collapsed into a simultaneous account—as they are in real life. The preceding sections of *The Wisdom of the Throne* can be understood as Sadra's philosophic "commentary" on the reality to which all these symbols (in Part II-C) point. But it should be evident by now that the eschatological symbols he is commenting on cannot be understood simply as a rhetorical or more popular embellishment of some separate philosophic truth; the relation between these two forms of expression is far more complex than that (cf. Chapter VI-B).

that the Concluding Testament returns even more forcefully to the very real conflicts of interpretation surrounding the Prophetic legacy in Mulla Sadra's own immediate historical setting.

B. The Prophet and Imam

It is no coincidence that both kinds of eschatological symbols, both kinds of Paradise and Hell, continue to be juxtaposed throughout the concluding section (II-C). They point to two fundamentally different, and equally essential, perspectives on the same field of experience; and Sadra's guiding purpose here, as throughout his writing, is to indicate both the immense significance of that difference and, at the same time, to clarify the rigorous limits of that unique "knowing" or vision characteristic of the transcendent perspective.[92] "Seeing things as they really are," he indicates, requires a transformation in the knower's point of inner vision, not in the "things" seen. And the special wisdom he is concerned with has much to do with overcoming not only the original egoistic "blindness" to the transcendent dimension of man's being, but also that second sort of blindness which not infrequently follows the discovery of that "Light."[93] On that level, *The Wisdom of the Throne* is concerned with developing that rare insight and capacity to integrate both these aspects of our being. The kind of discernment he is pointing to could be expressed by saying that this book is first of all about knowing the true imam (the guide or master), and

[92] Both of these aspects are beautifully summarized in his description of the "fourth" and endless stage of the soul's path of perfection in the *Shawāhid*, pp. 207-208: "Now the complete and perfect ones, after traveling to God and arriving There, have still other journeys: some of these are in God, and some of them are from God [to their fellow men], yet with God and the power of His Light, *just as it was before that*, with the power of [the soul's] powers and the lights of its places of perception—although they are also with God's guidance and His grace to whomever He wills. And yet the difference between the two conditions is something that cannot be hidden, nor can it even be reckoned" (emphasis added).

[93] There is an integral connection between Sadra's use of this metaphor (cf. the epigraph above) and similar descriptions of the philosopher's progress in the Sun-Line-Cave section of Plato's *Republic*. It would be no exaggeration to say that Sadra's work as a whole is simply an appropriate restatement of the insights expressed in that famous passage.

then about discovering the true prophet: the "fully human being" (*al-insān al-kāmil*) is both of these.[94]

The Wisdom of the Throne does not offer any doctrinal formulas or prescriptions for achieving this end: it only sketches the structure of the situation. In that light, the only conclusions that could be literally stated are the seemingly negative ones: *ma'rifa*, enlightenment, the "Paradise" of noetic Being—none of these offers any literal "answers" or solutions to life's problems and conflicts, at least on the planes where those answers (and problems) are normally imagined. The condition of transcendence cannot be approached by any specific actions or forms of behavior or belief, and it cannot be restricted to or grasped as any specific form of knowledge. But baldly stated, without the actual experience that could alone make them meaningful, such conclusions are not simply useless. They could also be dangerous in many ways. That fact helps to explain why Mulla Sadra wrote the way he did.

So it should be evident by now why the search for the "imam," for that condition of *ma'rifa* or awareness of Being to which the symbols of revelation point, is the central theme running through all of Sadra's writings. And it may have become clear how that search is ultimately universal and inherent in our condition, in what he calls the ongoing "transubstantiation" of man's innermost being (*ḥaraka jawharīya*). Without that indispensable interpreter —who, he indicates, is the same Reality in all Its manifestations, one that is paradoxically always present, even when "unseen"—the inner meaning of the prophetic symbols of transcendence will remain concealed. And without that insight, the words of the prophets can only be understood as a sort of ideology reflecting and guiding

[94] This last Arabic expression has often been translated, somewhat misleadingly, as the "Perfect Man." In fact, the central contrast it alludes to is the distance between *insān*, the fully human, noetic dimension of man's being, and *bashar*, the physical human animal (or more precisely, the traits of soul that correspond to that limited conception of man's essential reality). In that context, the term *kamāl* ("perfection" or "completion") refers to the full inner realization of the noetic, transcendent aspect of man's nature, not to some imagined type or formal standard of an idealized perfection. The state of this fully realized being can be described very simply as one who truly loves others as himself—because he is completely aware at all times that they actually *are* (his) Self. Obviously, it is one thing to conceive or state this, and quite another to realize and live it.

the multitude of conflicting beliefs and worldly interests in the larger community.

And yet, Sadra emphasizes, that situation remains true even when one has "seen the Light" and discovered the imam: one remains—perhaps more than ever—part of that community. That final, "descending" movement—"from God to man"—is also integral to that Return which is the subject of Part II. It is why Sadra concludes this book with an allusion to the "Gathering" of his community to the Prophet and Imams. At that point, he suggests, one can begin to appreciate the full wisdom of Prophetic speech.

THE WISDOM OF THE THRONE

[218][1] *In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate*:

Praise be to God, Who placed us among those *whose heart he opened to Islam, so that he might follow a light from his Lord* (39:22); Who caused us to be among *His servants, to whom He has given mercy from Him, and knowledge from His Presence* (18:65),[2] those whom He guided with certainty *to the path of God* (14:1), the Truly Real; and Who gave them *a tongue to speak truthfully to those who should come after* (26:84)! And may His blessings be upon Muhammad, the best of those who *were given wisdom and conclusive judgment* (38:20), and upon his Family,[3] who gained the most ample portion and largest share in the inheritance of prophethood and wisdom—upon all of them the blessings of the Truly Real, the Most High!

1 *Al-Ḥikma al-'Arshīya*: "the wisdom based on the immediate realization of transcendence," as opposed to the formal learning and limited discursive reasoning of the philosophers and theologians mentioned later in the Prologue. See Chapters IV and especially V-A in the Introduction for a more detailed discussion of the complex meaning of this title.

2 The context of this Koranic verse is a famous passage in Sura 18 in which Moses encounters a mysterious stranger to whom God has granted an immediate inspired knowledge of the inner meaning of things. This figure was traditionally identified with the legendary Khiḍr (the eternally Green One), who had gained immortality and great wisdom by discovering the Fountain of Life. In later Sufism, Khiḍr became the prototype of the inner spiritual guide. Hence Sufi writers commonly understood the final words of this verse as alluding to that inner knowing or awareness of transcendence (*'ilm ladunnī*: cf. the title of §1, n. 11 below) which was the source and aim of the spiritual Path. Sadra, following that tradition, alludes here to his central metaphysical principle of "presential knowledge" (*'ilm ḥuḍūrī*), or the transcendent union of Being and consciousness, which is articulated in the various theses of Part I: cf. the explanations in the Introduction, V-B.

3 The mention of the Prophet's "Family" here is not simply formulaic; it is the first of many allusions to the special role of the Shiite Imams (or rather, their spiritual Reality) in Sadra's religious and political philosophy. See the Introduction, III-A and F and VI-B, for Sadra's philosophic understanding of the Imamate and a discussion of his position with regard to the conflicting interpretations of Shiism in his own historical milieu.

These are the words of His humble servant, most needful of the pardon of his Lord the Exalted, (the words) of Muḥammad al-Shīrāzī, called Ṣadr al-Dīn—May God brighten his heart with the Light of true inner knowledge and certainty! This is a treatise in which I shall mention some of the divine matters and sacred insights with which God illuminated my heart from the world of Mercy and Light. These are insights which the thoughts of the multitude have never grasped, and none of these radiant jewels is to be found in the treasuries of any of the famous philosophers or the well-known modern thinkers. For they were given nothing of this Wisdom, and of this Light they grasped nothing but total darkness, since *they did not enter the houses by their doors* (2:189),[4] and thus were deprived of the sweet drink of true inner knowledge through the pursuit of their own mirages.[5] Indeed, these insights are like glowing embers lit at the Lamp-niche of Prophecy and Sainthood,[6]

[4] Sadra uses this Koranic verse to allude to the famous Prophetic saying, "I am the City of Knowledge, and Ali is its Door (or Gate)," which he mentions again in several later passages (e.g., II-C, §14, and the Concluding Testament). He takes that tradition as a symbolic expression for the complex relation of the roles of prophethood (*nubuwwa*) and *walāya* (the imamate, or more broadly "nearness" to God: cf. n. 6 below), which is one of the central themes of his work. See the summary of these issues in the Introduction, especially at III-A and F and VI-B.

From this point on, the Prologue is composed of fragments of many Koranic phrases; only the longer quotations have been italicized.

[5] *Ma'rifa*, or true inner knowledge by direct experience, involving an immediate transformation in the knower's state of being, is contrasted positively here with the formal, conceptual learning or knowledge (*'ilm*) characteristic of the particular sciences (*'ulūm*), including the standard disciplines of the religious Law. This contrast of *ma'rifa* and *'ilm* was a traditional usage among the Sufi "knowers" (the *'urafā'*, from the same root as *ma'rifa*), and much of Sadra's philosophy is concerned with clarifying the inner relation between these two conditions of being. See the preliminary discussions of this key theme in Chapters II-A, V and VI of the Introduction.

[6] *Mishkāt al-nubuwwa wa al-walāya*: the "Lamp-niche" (*mishkāt*) here, as well as the "Light" mentioned in several preceding sentences, is an allusion to the famous Light-verse (24:35) of the Koran: *God is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The image of His Light is like a Niche containing a Lamp. . . .* In Sadra's interpretation (building on both Suhrawardi and Ibn Arabi, as well as many other earlier Sufis), this symbol is the equivalent of the divine Throne (n. 1), or the noetic reality of Being (*al-wujūd*) which is realized in the "completely human being" (*al-insān al-kāmil*), that is, the prophet and imam (*walī*).

drawn forth from the sources of the Book and Prophetic Tradition. They are not to be acquired through the presentations of the (narrowly rationalistic) investigators, nor by any amount of study with professors (of purely formal learning).

I have mentioned these insights as a beacon to inquiring travelers (on the spiritual path)[7] and as a reminder to all brothers in the true faith—even if these things should horrify the ignorant and vainly disputatious and enrage [219] the enemies of the Light of wisdom and certainty, those who follow the darkness of the banished devils. For I have taken refuge in the Countenance of God the Eternal and with those near to Him against the evil of His stubborn enemies; and I have sought shelter in His Lights and in His immense Kingdom against the darkness of the delusions of those who would deny Him.[8] O my God, if I have shown pride, it is in those blessings that You bestowed upon me—for it was You who commanded: *And as*

See the discussions of these relations in the Introduction, V and VI.

Sadra's understanding of the relations of prophecy and *walāya* or the imamate ("Sainthood" is only a rough approximation: cf. nn. 233 and 276 below) is a recurrent theme in his work, since it is the crucial point of intersection between his metaphysics and his political and religious philosophy: cf. the Introduction, III-A and F and VI-B.

7 *Al-sullāk al-nāẓirīn*: this epithet indicates the rare combination of abilities and spiritual ambitions Sadra would require of the true philosopher or completely realized being (cf. the Introduction, II). The first term commonly referred to those "traveling" the spiritual way; the second was ordinarily applied to the contemplation and logical methods of inquiry (*naẓar: theōria*) of the Peripatetic philosophic tradition. This combination, like so many of Sadra's key terms and orientations, is taken over from Suhrawardi (Introduction, III-B and C): see the Introduction to Suhrawardi's *Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq*, pp. 9-13.

8 "Those who would deny Him" translates *mu'aṭṭilūn*: the term refers not to professed atheists, but rather to those religious scholars who would put God "out of work" (the act of *ta'ṭīl*) by denying any knowable human relation to the divine except through a particular historical revelation and its presumably authoritative legalist interpretation. The historical background of this usage is a much earlier dispute between the Mu'tazilite and Ash'arite kalam theological schools, which Sadra alludes to in §5 below. The Mu'tazilites were often accused of *ta'ṭīl* or nullifying the humanly knowable reality of the divine Attributes by assimilating them all to the unknowable divine Essence. Against this tendency to separate God and man (and its immediate clerical manifestations), Sadra here opposes the dimension of direct experiential access to that inner reality of the soul (the heavenly, angelic "Kingdom" or *malakūt*) which he sees as the actual source of the religious symbolism discussed throughout this work. See the longer discussions of this central issue in the Introduction, III-A and V and VI.

for the blessings of your Lord, recount them (93:11). And if I have done evil or done wrong to my soul, I have sought Your forgiveness —and it was You Who said: *And he who does evil or does wrong to his soul, and then seeks the forgiveness of God: he shall find God most Forgiving, most Merciful* (4:110).

Now as for the matters recorded in this treatise, which is called *The Wisdom of the Throne,* some of them are included in the verses of the Koran under (the heading of) "true faith in God," and some of them are included under "knowledge of the Last Day." These two kinds of knowledge,[9] which are alluded to in many Koranic verses as "true faith in God and the Last Day," are the noblest of the true (forms of) knowledge through which man can become part of the host of *angels drawn near to God* (4:172). But by denying and rejecting these things he can fall into *manifest error* (3:164; etc.), depart from the fold of the truly faithful, blind himself to the Beauty of *the Lord of the worlds* (1:2; etc.), and be resurrected among the devils: *No! What they were busy acquiring has taken possession of their hearts. No! On that Day they shall surely be veiled from their Lord!* (83:14-15).

Now the time has come to begin to present these matters to the minds and reflections (of my readers). They should refer to our more detailed books for the establishment of proofs and demonstrations concerning each of these topics and theories. (Here we shall give) only subtle allusions, which may be sufficient for those of a properly refined natural disposition, enough to guide rightly such

[9] The term "true faith" (*īmān*), here and in all of Sadra's writings, is equivalent to true inner knowing or the enlightened awareness of Being (*ma'rifa*: cf. n. 5 above). In this technical sense, it is the opposite of "belief" (*i'tiqād*) or external "submission" (*islām*) to a particular doctrine or "knowledge" (*'ilm*) in the sense of conceptualized beliefs. Cf. the further references and discussions of these key distinctions in the Introduction, V-A, and in Part II-C, §9-d, n. 229 below.

The distinction Sadra draws here between theology ("true faith in God") and eschatology ("knowledge of the Last Day") corresponds to what earlier Islamic philosophers more commonly called *al-mabda' wa al-ma'ād,* the ontic "Origin" of all things and their "Return" to that Source. All of Sadra's comprehensive works follow this same traditional order of exposition: see the Introduction, IV-B, V, and VI, on the contents and relations of these two divisions and the significance of this interplay of theological and philosophic language in Sadra's writings.

ardent and noble souls. We shall set forth these matters in two "Places of Illumination."[10]

[10] *Al-mashriq*: the "orient," or place and direction of "illumination" (*ishrāq*) by the rays of the rising sun. Here it is used as a technical term deriving from Suhrawardi's "Illuminationist" philosophy (*ḥikmat al-ishrāq*); see the Introduction, III-B and C, and the discussions in Corbin, *Prolégomènes I*, pp. xxv-xxxvi. The "illumination" in question here is the timeless emanation of the "Light" (cf. n. 6) of Being in the phenomenal worlds, and the inner realization of the soul, in all its dimensions, as the "orient" within which that process unfolds. On the subject matter of these two main divisions and their interrelations, see the Introduction, IV-B, V, and VI. Note also the use of this epithet (*mashriqī*) in the titles of Principles §§3, 6, and 13 below.

PART I

First Place of Illumination, concerning knowledge of God, of His Attributes, His Names, and His Signs

It contains (the following) Principles:

§1. *Principle (deriving from) the divine Presence,*[11] *concerning the divisions of Being and the establishment of the Primary Being*[12]

That which exists is either the Reality of Being or something else. By the Reality of Being we mean That which is not mixed with anything but Being, whether a generality or a particularity, a limit or a bound, a quiddity, an imperfection, or a privation—and this is

[11] *Qā'ida ladunniya: qā'ida* refers to "principle" in the sense of a basic rule, foundation, or fundament—that on which a larger structure of knowledge rests. For the Koranic and Sufi background of the notion of *'ilm ladunnī*, knowledge taken directly from the divine "Presence," see n. 2 above. As explained in the Introduction, V-A and V-B, all the Principles of Part I express different facets of this simple enlightened awareness of what Sadra calls here the "Reality of Being."

[12] See the Introduction, V-B, for a summary account of Sadra's ontology and the technical terminology used in this and succeeding chapters. This Principle introduces the thesis of the primacy of real "being" (*al-wujūd*) with respect to its "quiddities" or intrinsic determinations (*al-māhiya*), which is the foundation of Sadra's ontological thought.

Throughout this translation, it should be kept in mind that the original Arabic has no capitalization, and that it does not distinguish between the third-person masculine and neuter. In this translation capitals have generally been used, for the sake of clarity, where some aspect of the divine seems to be particularly intended. But given Sadra's understanding of the inner structure of Being, any verbal or conceptual separation of relative and Absolute Being remains intrinsically ambiguous. Similarly, the necessity of choosing "he" or "it" to translate the Arabic third-person forms often suggests a stronger separation of theological and philosophic discourse than is actually the case in the original text. These ambiguities are both intentional and important; cf. the Introduction, III-E, IV, and V, on the relations of philosophic and religious forms of expression in Sadra's writings.

what is called the "Necessary Being."[13] [220] Therefore we say that if the Reality of Being did not exist, then nothing at all would exist. But the consequence (of this conditional statement) is self-evidently false; therefore its premise is likewise (false).

As for showing the necessity (of the actual existence) of this Primary Being, this is because everything other than this Reality of Being is either a specific quiddity or a particular being, mixed with privation and imperfection.[14] Now every quiddity other than Being (Itself) exists only through Being, not by itself. How (could it exist without Being)?! For if a quiddity were to be taken by itself, separate from being, that quiddity itself could not even "be" itself, to say nothing of its being existent. Because to affirm something (in this case, "being") of something else (in this case, a particular quiddity) already presupposes the establishment and being of that other thing. And that being—if it is anything other than the Reality of Being—is composed of Being *per se* (or "Being *qua* Being")[15] and of some other particularity. But every particularity other than Being is (taken by itself) nonexistent or privative. Thus every com-

[13] The phrase "Necessary Being" (*wājib al-wujūd*) is ultimately derived from Avicenna's famous "proof" of the existence of God based on the concepts of necessary, contingent, and impossible existence; cf. the translation and commentary by P. Morewedge in *The Metaphysica of Avicenna*, pp. 47ff. By Sadra's time, however, this formula was widely employed by theologians and Sufis as a synonym for "God," often with meanings and in contexts far removed from Avicenna's original usage. "Quiddity" (*māhiya*) is the "whatness" of particular existent things, that determinate formal aspect which distinguishes them from one another, when considered in abstraction from their Ground or Being: cf. the remainder of this Principle and the further discussion of this concept in the Introduction, V-B-2.

[14] The expressions "privation" (or "nonexistence": *'adam*) and "imperfection" (*naqṣ*) here are not meant to contrast with some abstract standard of ideal "perfection." Rather, what Sadra is pointing to is the paradoxical relation of the noetic Whole of Being—which is characterized by "perfection" (*kamāl*) in the sense of absolute wholeness, comprehensiveness, and completion—to Its endless determinate manifestations. Each of those particular existent things (the *mawjūdāt*), taken in its relative or purely determinate aspect (that is, in regard to its quiddity), is in fact defined precisely by the endless things it is *not*. From this perspective, each existent is therefore necessarily "deprived" of an infinite spectrum of other qualities. Cf. the further discussion of this point in Principle §2 below.

[15] *Al-wujūd bimā huwa wujūd*: this is the standard Arabic translation of the famous formula *to on hēi on*, which has played such a problematic role in the many interpretations (including Sadra's) of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.

pound (of a particular quiddity and Being) is posterior to the simplicity of Being and stands in need of Being.[16]

So privation (or "nonbeing") does not enter into the existence and actual occurrence of a thing, although it may enter into its definition and its concept. For to affirm any concept of something and to predicate it of that thing—whether (the concept be) a quiddity or some other attribute, and whether it be affirmed or denied of something—always presupposes the being of that thing. Our discussion always comes back to Being: either there is an infinite regression (of predications and subjects) or one arrives in the end at an Absolute Being, unmixed with anything else.

Thus it has become evident that the Source of existence of everything that exists is this Pure Reality of Being, unmixed with anything other than Being. This Reality is not restricted by any definition, limitation, imperfection, contingent potentiality, or quiddity; nor is It mixed with any generality, whether of genus, species, or differentia, nor with any accident, whether specific or general. For Being is prior to all these descriptions that apply to quiddities, and That which has no quiddity other than Being is not bound by any generality or specificity. It has no specific difference and no particularity apart from Its own Essence (or Self); It has no form, nor has It any agent or end. On the contrary, It is Its own Form, and That which gives form to every thing, because It is the completion of the essence of every thing. And It is the completion of every thing because Its Essence is actualized in every respect.

No one can describe Him or reveal Him but He Himself, and there is no demonstration of Him but His own Essence (or Self). Therefore He gave witness through His Self to Himself and to the Unicity of His Self when He said: *God gives witness that there is no god but He* (3:18). For His Unity is not the particular unity that is found in an individual of a (particular) nature; nor is It the generic or specific unity that is found in any general notion or any quiddity. [221] Neither is It the conjunctive unity that is found

[16] This passage is a concise statement of Sadra's fundamental principle of the "priority of being" (*aṣālat al-wujūd*) with regard to quiddities, which is explored further in §2 below. The related problem of the ontological status and reality of quiddity (that is, of determinate form in general) is taken up in §§6-11 below, in Sadra's discussion of the intelligible Forms or divine "Names," in their relation to the Essence or Being.

when a number of things become assembled or unified into a single thing; nor is It the unity of contiguity found in quantities and measurable things. Nor, as you will learn, is It any of the other relative unities, such as unity by resemblance, homogeneity, analogy, correspondence, reduplication—although (certain) philosophers have allowed that[17]—congruence, or any of the other kinds of unity that are not the True Unity. No, His Unity is other (than these relative ones), unknowable in Its innermost core, like His Essence—May He be exalted!—except that His Unity is the Source of all (these other) unities, just as His being is the Source of all (particular) beings.[18] Hence *He has no second* (112:4).

Similarly, His unitary Knowledge is precisely the Reality of that Knowledge which is unmixed with any ignorance, so that It is Knowledge of all things in every respect.[19] And the same can be said

[17] This is an allusion to a notorious doubt raised by the Jewish Avicennan philosopher Ibn Kammūna (d. 683/1281), as to whether there could not possibly be two or more Necessary Beings, each having a different, but unknown essence; this would imply a duplication or doubling (*taḍāyuf*) of God. Sadra gives a brief argument against this possibility in §3 (see n. 23) below. The philosophic significance of Ibn Kammūna's objection at this point is that it represents a certain natural tendency of the mind (one especially frequent in some forms of kalam theology) to conceive of the Necessary Being, or God, as a particular entity somehow separate from created, contingent beings. But that separation, Sadra points out, assumes a mental notion of God as still another "thing" (that is, a numerical unity, in the language of this section), however exalted or different from more familiar existents, rather than the—literally *un*-imaginable—all-encompassing Whole of Being. Cf. the Introduction, V-B-3.

[18] See the further treatment of this problem of the transcendent Unity of Being in §§3-4 below. This Pythagorean affirmation of the derivation of all earthly "ones" from the True Unity of the transcendent One, already highly developed in Plotinus and subsequent Neoplatonists, took on an added significance for Islamic philosophers in light of the central kalam theological doctrine of *tawḥīd* or the "affirmation of divine Unity" (cf. n. 23). Kalam theologians, Neoplatonically oriented philosophers, and Sufis all adapted this formula to their needs. (A. Ivry's translation of *Al-Kindi's Metaphysics*, pp. 76-114 and accompanying notes, illustrates the more explicitly Neoplatonic usage of this theme.) Sadra's own metaphysics is a far more elaborate conceptual articulation of this paradoxical reality in terms of the Avicennan language of being and quiddity: cf. the Introduction, V-B-2 to 4.

[19] Sadra's conception of divine Knowledge, summarized in this sentence, is discussed in greater detail and contrasted with earlier philosophic views in §§6-11 below: see the general discussions of these issues in the Introduction, V-B. His primary departure from the traditional philosophical accounts (all deriving from Aristotle's description of the divine *Nous* in *Metaphysics* XII, 9)

of all of His Attributes of Perfection (that is, Life, Power, Will, etc.—which are likewise One with His Essence and Being).[20]

§2. *Principle (deriving from) the Throne*[21] *(concerning the Simplicity of Being)*

All that which is Simple in Its essential Reality is, by virtue of Its (absolute) Unity, all things. It is deprived of none of those things, except for what is on the order of imperfections, privations, and contingencies.

(For example, taking any particular being "A," suppose) you say "A is not B": now if that with respect to which A is (itself A) were exactly the same as that with respect to which A is not-B, so that A in itself would of its very essence be the criterion for this negation—(if this were so), then the very essence of A would be something privative, such that everyone who intellected A would also intellect "not-B." But this consequence is (obviously) false, and its antecedent is also false. Thus it is established that (in any particular

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is his insistence on the ultimate unity of Being and "Knowledge" (that is, *'aql* or noetic Consciousness); cf. the end of §2 and all of §10 below. In this conception, God "knows" particular contingent things not merely through the intellection of their noetic archetypes or formal principles, but also immediately (here: "in every respect"), since as the Ground of their being He actually *is* what they essentially are.

Humanly speaking, knowledge in this special sense is accessible only as a function of one's level of consciousness or awareness of Being (*'ilm ḥuḍūrī*), not through any particular acquired learning or belief (*'ilm ḥuṣūlī*); cf. the discussion of this crucial point in the Introduction, V-A and V-B-3.

20 Sadra's theological terminology here (and in §§5-11 below) is taken over from the Islamic religious discipline of *'ilm al-kalām* (cf. Introduction, III-B and C). The "Attributes of Perfection," or of the divine Essence, were traditionally distinguished in kalam from the "Attributes of Action," those involving God's relation to the world or creation, the question Sadra takes up here (at least explicitly) in §§12-16 below.

21 *Qā'ida 'arshīya*: see n. 1 and especially the Introduction, V-A and B-3 for the relevant meanings of the divine "Throne" here, in the title of §10, and in the title of the treatise as a whole. In all these cases the reference is essentially the same as the divine "Presence" (n. 11) in the title of §1: each of these chapters discusses an aspect of the transcendent dimension of Being that can only be realized through a revelatory condition of enlightened inner awareness.

For Sadra's understanding of the "Simplicity" of Being in this chapter and its integral relation to his other ontological theses, see the Introduction, V-B-2 and 3.

being "A") the substrate of "A-ness" is something essentially compound (of Being and a particular quiddity). And even according to the mind (that is, at the level of mental, conceptual being, the notion of "A-ness" is a compound composed) of the notion of something having being, by which A exists, and the notion of the privation of something, by which A is not B nor any of the other things that are negated of it.

Thus it is known that every thing of which something that has being may be negated is not absolutely Simple in its essential reality. And the converse is likewise true: all That which is Simple in Its essential Reality can have nothing that has being negated of It. Otherwise, It would not be Simple in Its essential Reality, but rather composed of two aspects: an aspect by which it is such (such as "A") and an aspect by which it is some other way (that is, not-B, not-C, and so on). So now it has been established that the Simple (Being) is all existent things with respect to their being and perfection, but not with respect to their privations and imperfections.

And by this it is established [222] that His Knowledge of all existent things is Simple Knowledge, and that their presence in Him is Simple in its essential Reality. For all things in Him are included in His Knowledge in a higher and more perfect way, since "knowledge" is (only) an expression for Being, on the condition that It be unmixed with matter.

So understand this, my beloved, and profit by it!

§3. *Principle (deriving from) the Source of Illumination*[22] *(concerning the Uniqueness of the Necessary Being)*

The Necessary Being is "One and without partner" because He is Complete in Reality, Perfect in Essence, Infinite in Power and Intensity, and because—as you have learned—He is the Pure Reality

[22] *Qā'ida mashriqīya*: the same descriptive epithet (borrowed from Suhrawardi: cf. n. 10 above) occurs in the titles of §§6, 9, and 13 below, in the titles of Parts I and II, and in important section headings of many of Sadra's works; see the discussion in the Introduction, IV-C, n. 63. Here it refers to a principle whose reality can only be grasped in the immediate experience of transcendence, which provides the necessary premises for the analysis and conceptualization undertaken here. The meaning is close to that of the divine "Throne" and "Presence" in the titles of §§1, 2, and 10.

of Being, unlimited and without bound. For if His Being had some limit or particularity in any respect, It would have to be limited and particularized by something other than Being; there would have to be something with power over Him limiting, specifying, and circumscribing Him. But that is impossible. So there is no good and no perfection of being that does not have its Source in Him and grow out of Him.

Here is the proof of the affirmation of His Uniqueness.[23] The Necessary Being cannot be multiple, because if that were so, it would require postulating a being both necessary and yet circumscribed in its being, as the second member of a pair. But then He (that is, the "first" Necessary Being) could not encompass every being, since there would turn out to be another being that did not belong to Him and did not derive from or emanate from Him. In turn, this would result in His having a privative aspect of impossibility or contingency, so that He would have to be one of a pair and composite (of being and a particular restricted quiddity) like other contingent things, and therefore could not be included in that Reality of Being which is unmixed with any limitation or with the privation (implied by) this difference.

Thus it has been determined that *He has no second* (112:4) in Being and that every perfection of being is a sprinkling of His Perfection, every good a glimmering from the radiant Light of His Beauty. For He is the Source of Being, and everything else is subordinate to Him, dependent on Him for the substantiation of its essence.

§4. *A Misleading Delusion and its Removal (concerning the fundamental distinction between the concept and reality of Being)*[24]

Surely the feeblest and most inadequate of ways to prove (the truth

[23] The argument given here was a standard reply to the famous doubt of the philosopher Ibn Kammūna already alluded to in §1 (n. 17) above. The "affirmation of divine Unity" (*tawḥīd*) that is the object of this argument is also the title of the ritual formula quoted in the first sentence of this chapter, words that are repeated several times daily as part of the canonical Islamic prayer.

[24] This section (which is basically a continuation of §3) refers to some of the most common confusions and misconceptions concerning the transcendent "Unity of Being" (*waḥdat al-wujūd*). Much of Sadra's original work was devoted to

of) the affirmation of divine Unity is that followed by certain of the more recent thinkers, who (mistakenly) associated their method with the direct experience of some of the godlike sages[25]—May God preserve them from such (delusions)! This approach is based upon (the fact) that the derivative *concept* of "that which exists" (*al-mawjūd*) is something general and all-inclusive, while being (*al-wujūd*) is particular, real, and unknowable in its innermost core. Now it is admissible, they said, that the being which is the source of the derivation of (the concept) "that which exists" is something self-subsistent—that is, the Reality of the Necessary Being—and that the being of everything else is equivalent to the (dependent) relation of those things to the Necessary Being. (The concept) "that which exists," then, would be more general than that Reality and [223] more general than everything else which is (dependently) related to It. Therefore the meaning (of "that which exists") must be one of these two things: either the Self-Subsistent Being, or that which is (dependently) related to It. And the criterion of this (that is, which is the origin of the concept "that which exists") must be which of them is the Source of effects.

(So far there was no problem with their reasoning.) "But for those who are napping, even an easy matter is a great burden." For

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clarifying that problematic formula historically associated with the school of Ibn Arabi and related Sufis and Neoplatonists; cf. all of Chapter V in the Introduction. For the central role of the distinction between real and conceptual being (*wujūd dhihnī*) in Sadra's thought, see the Introduction, V-B.

25 The term *muta'akhkhirūn*, the "moderns" or "more recent thinkers," was often applied to all the Islamic philosophers (including Alfarabi and others centuries before Mulla Sadra), as distinguished from the "ancients" (*qudamā'*) or pagan Greek philosophers. However, when Sadra uses the term disparagingly, as he does here, he is usually referring to those later kalam theologians (*mutakallimūn*), such as Fakhr al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210) and al-Dawwānī (d. 907/1501), who he felt had abused Avicenna's methods and forms of argument in a dialectical and rhetorical fashion that ignored their original philosophic context and intentions. The term *muta'allihūn*, the "godlike" or "divine" sages, was usually applied to the prophets, inspired philosophers such as Plato and Pythagoras (cf. n. 105 below) and Plotinus (nn. 98 and 300), and especially to the famous Sufi "knowers" (the *'urafā'*). This usage is again taken over from Suhrawardi: see, for example, his *Talwīḥāt*, p. 74. Here the mention of "direct experience" (*dhawq*, or "tasting," one of the most basic Sufi terms) is an obvious allusion to this last group, as Sadra again indicates the indispensable role of the experience of transcendence in illuminating his conceptual discussion of the "Reality of Being."

it is true that Being—if by that one means the Self-Subsistent Being—could be called "That which exists." But these people overlooked the very crux of the matter, which is whether or not His Essence—May He be exalted!—is identical with the meaning of that Absolute Being Whose various modes or individual (manifestations) are established in things.[26] This way (of realizing the inner Unity of Being in all Its manifestations) was barred to them because they had already affirmed that there was no meaning to the Absolute Being that comprises all that exists except for an abstract, derivative notion reckoned among the (purely) mental intelligibles and corresponding to nothing (real).[27] I wish that I knew how someone proficient in grammar and usage could consider a certain expression (such as "that which exists") to be derivative, and yet not understand the concept of the *source* of (such a) derivation! How could the derivative term be the best-known of all concepts (since "that which exists," on their view, was immediately and self-evidently known by everyone), while its source remained the most hidden of unknowns—indeed impossible even to conceive? And how could the derived meaning be one, while its source was indeterminate between two things, one of them that Essence which is unknowable in Its innermost core, and the second consisting in the relation to that Unknown—for surely the relation to the unknown is also unknown?!

No, the truth of the matter is that this general concept which is the source of derivation of (the concept) "That Which Exists Absolutely" is (simply another title for) Something Which is realized in

[26] The "modes" or "aspects" (*anḥā'*) of Being and Its "individuals" (*afrād*) are among Sadra's most common technical terms referring to determinate things considered as immanent manifestations of Being (*wujūdāt* or *maẓāhir*), rather than as separate and self-subsistent "existents." Cf. the further discussion of his ontological vocabulary in the Introduction, V-B-2.

[27] This view, according to which "being" or "existence" is simply the most abstract and emptiest of all universals, was a widely held philosophic position among the "Peripatetic" school in Sadra's time, corresponding to their assertion of the ontic "priority of quiddity" (*aṣālat al-māhiya*). Sadra himself once supported that view: in a rare autobiographical remark in the *Kitāb al-Mashā'ir* (p. 35; p. 152 of the French translation), he mentions the decisive experience of "unveiling" which revealed to him the reality and primacy of Being and provided the foundation of his subsequent philosophy. Cf. the Introduction, V-A for the importance of this starting point.

all things, numbered according to their number, and predicated of them according to Its varying degrees of intensity and weakness, priority and posteriority.[28] And the most perfect and most intense of beings is the Truly Real Being which is the Pure Reality of Being, unmixed with anything else but Being.

With respect to Himself He is the most obvious and manifest of beings. But because of the very excess of His manifestness (by which) He overwhelms and overpowers the senses and the (ordinary) minds, He has become veiled from (man's) understanding and vision.[29] Thus the aspect through which He is hidden (to ordinary perception) is precisely that by which He is manifest (in the awareness of the enlightened "knower").

The question of the affirmation of divine Unity depends on this. It can only be resolved in this way, not by any other at all.

§5. *Principle (on the relation of the divine Attributes and Essence)*[30]

His Attributes—May He be exalted!—are the very same as His Es-

[28] This sentence is a concise statement of Sadra's ontological principle of the systematic "ambiguity of being" (*tashkīk fī al-wujūd*) in its different levels of manifestation; again, see the Introduction, V-B. The mention of "priority and posteriority" in being (as opposed to relative "intensity") is probably a reference to the problem of distinguishing the separate intellects—all of the same immaterial modality of being—which were believed to be the "unmoved movers" of the celestial spheres (cf. Aristotle's *Metaphysics* XII, 8). It was said that while not differing intrinsically in rank, they must be differentiated "accidentally" according to the relative priority of the heaven whose movements they inspired.

[29] The image of the "black Light" of Being or divine Reality—of such overwhelming radiance that It "blinds" the eye of the mind's imaginative faculty and our language adjusted to the level of discrete temporal existents—was a familiar one among the Sufis and comparable figures in many other traditions; cf. the famous use of this image by the Persian poet Shabistārī, *Gulshan-i Rāz*, pp. 100-101. Sadra's ontology is simply a more complex articulation of this same paradoxical structure of reality.

[30] As already mentioned (n. 20), this formulation of the problem of the divine Attributes and Essence is taken over from earlier kalam theology. Sadra interprets this question, on the philosophic level, as concerning the nature and reality of the intelligible formal principles of reality (the divine "Realities" or "Names") in relation to the Unitary Being discussed in §§1-4; §§5-11 all consider this problem from different perspectives.

Here the two major kalam schools are taken to represent the two extremes to be avoided in considering this problem. The Ash'arites were known for their tendency toward *tashbīh*, or "likening" God anthropomorphically to human

sence. This is not (to be understood) as the Ash'arite (theologians) put it, who affirmed a plurality of Attributes in actual (not merely conceptual) being, and thereby entailed the multiplicity of the eight coeternal (Attributes separate from the divine Essence). Nor is it like the saying of the Mu'tazilite (theologians), who totally denied the distinct conceptual reality of the Attributes, but then affirmed their effects and substituted the (in their view, utterly transcendent) Essence as their replacement (in causing those effects). (Their position) is just like some of those (recent thinkers mentioned in §4, who would deny the extraconceptual reality of Being—claiming quiddities as the primary realities—but then still attempt to speak of God as) the Source of Being. May He be exalted above both the nullifying (of the Attributes by the Mu'tazilites) and the anthropomorphism (implicit in the Ash'arite conception)!

No (the unity of the divine Attributes and Essence can only be rightly understood) in the way known by *those deeply rooted in knowledge* (3:7) from this *intermediate community* (2:143), those who are not overcome by either excess [224] or deficiency.

§6. *Principle (deriving from) the Source of Illumination (on the unity and perfection of God's Knowledge)*

His Knowledge of all things is One Reality. Yet while being One, it is knowledge of each (single) thing: *He does not leave anything small or large, but that He has counted it* (18:49). For if there should remain anything not known to this Knowledge, then It would not be the Reality of Knowledge, but rather knowledge in one respect and ignorance in another. But the reality of a thing *per se* (that is, what it really *is*)[31] cannot be combined with some-

realities; this granted the different Attributes an ontic autonomy verging (to use religious language) on a sort of "polytheism" (*shirk*). On the other hand, the Mu'tazilites, in their zeal for affirming the absolute Unity of the divine Essence, tended to deny all internal differentiations—and, ultimately, all real or humanly knowable divine attributes; their view was traditionally attacked as *ta'ṭīl* (cf. n. 8) or "nullification" of the meaningful reality of the divine Attributes. The dangers of that understanding of "negative" theology, as Sadra perceived them, are discussed in the Introduction, V-B-4 above.

31 *Ḥaqīqat al-shay' bimā hiya ḥaqīqat al-shay'*: this formula parallels Sadra's use of the famous Aristotelean expression "Being *qua* Being" (§1, n. 15 above). Here it refers to the "being" of a thing, as an immanent manifestation of the

thing else, or the whole thing would not have moved from potency to actuality. For we have already shown that His Knowledge is reducible to (if conceptually distinct from) His Being. So, just as His Being—May He be exalted!—is not mixed with privation of anything at all, likewise His Knowledge of His Essence (or Self), which is the Presence (to Himself) of His Essence, is not mixed with the absence of anything at all. This is because His Essence is That Which makes all things to be those things and Which gives all realities their reality. Therefore His Essence more truly *is* those things than they are in themselves. For by itself a thing is contingent, but together with That Which makes it a thing and Which gives it reality it is necessarily existing—and the actual being of a thing is more intense than its contingency.

Now as for the person who finds it difficult (to conceive) that His Knowledge—May He be exalted!—can be both One and yet knowledge of every (individual) thing, this is because that person imagines that this Unity is numerical and that His Knowledge is one in number. But we have already shown that this is not so. Rather, His Knowledge is One in the true sense, and so are the rest of His Attributes. There is nothing other than the Reality of the Truly Real that is One in this true sense. Instead, contingent things all have other kinds of unity, such as the unity of individuals, species, genera, contiguity, and so on.

These are among the most difficult of all questions concerning God. But *What is with God* (2:89; etc.) (in His Knowledge) are the actual, primordial Realities (of contingent things), from Which those things are descended at the level of shadows and phantom images.[32] And *What is with God* of those things more truly is those things than what they are by themselves.

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divine Being, in distinction to its quidditative aspect of implicit "privation" (cf. §1, n. 14, and all of §2), which distinguishes it from all other determinate entities.

[32] The "actual primordial Realities" (*al-ḥaqā'iq al-muḥaṣṣala al-muta'-aṣṣila*) are Sadra's version of the Platonic Forms (cf. II-A, §9), or the permanent noetic principles of intelligible reality; in theological language (§11 and elsewhere below) these are called the divine "Names." The key issue here is not the actual existence or nature of the Forms, but rather their inner relation to Being or the divine Essence. This problem had a very long history: cf. the classical philological account by H. A. Wolfson, "Extradeical and Intradeical Interpretations of Platonic Ideas." To a certain extent, this question was often

§7. *Principle (criticizing mistaken views of God's knowledge of particular things)*[33]

His knowledge—May He be exalted!—of contingent things is not of forms inscribed in His Essence—May He be exalted (above such a view)!—as is the well-known position of the Master of the philosophers (Aristotle) and the Peripatetics, and of their followers Alfarabi, Avicenna, and the rest.

Nor is His knowledge [225] of contingent things the same as the essences of externally existing contingent things, which was the view of the "Stoics"[34] and their followers such as Suhrawardi, al-Ṭūsī, and the more recent thinkers. This is impossible because His

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terminological, depending on where one wished to stop speaking of the "divine." More substantively, and especially in Islamic philosophy and theology (cf. the Introduction, V-B-4) this dispute often mirrored fundamentally differing practical and political orientations. Those favoring an exclusivist view of "revelation" —whether gnostics or more orthodox theologians and legists—tended to stress a strict *separation* of the ultimate Godhead and the more humanly knowable aspects of the divine. Sadra's repeated insistence here (in §§6-11 and elsewhere below) on the inclusion of the noetic Forms within the divine Essence, and on the union of Being and Knowledge at that level, reflects a radically different conception (and experience) of the God-man relationship. His philosophy is largely an attempt to articulate the nondualistic nature of that paradoxical relation, which had often been misunderstood (and vigorously attacked) as "monism," "pantheism," and so on.

33 This question of God's knowledge of contingent things, which merited only a few words in *Metaphysics* XII, became a central philosopheme for medieval Aristotelean thinkers because of the theological issues it raised: matters of divine "providence," predetermination, rewards and punishments, justice, and so on. In general, philosophers had tended to resist any naive implication of a directly acquired divine "knowledge" of human particulars (analogous to human learning), in part because of the apparent incompatibility of such a notion with the axiomatic immutability of the divine Nature. For details on the views summarily criticized here, based on Sadra's much longer discussions of this question in the *Asfār*, see Rahman, *Philosophy*, pp. 146-163.

34 The group Sadra actually intends here by the term "Stoics" (*riwāqīyūn*) is the "Illuminationist" (*ishrāqī*) school of Suhrawardi and his Neoplatonic and Hermetic predecessors. This mistaken usage of "Stoic" is common among later Islamic philosophers and doxographers such as Shahrastānī, but not in the earlier writings of Alfarabi; the origins of the confusion are still unclear. The inclusion of al-Ṭūsī within this group at this point refers solely to certain peculiarities in his treatment of this specific question of divine knowledge of particulars: see the details in Rahman, *Philosophy*, pp. 156-159. In general, the philosophy of al-Ṭūsī was otherwise strictly Avicennan and "Peripatetic," and differed radically from Suhrawardi's openly Neoplatonic orientation.

Knowledge is eternal, while those contingent things occur in time.

The position of the Mu'tazilites is also mistaken, because non-existent things (a "square circle" and the like, which they considered actually to subsist in God's Knowledge) do not exist at all (in the way they had posited).

The Ash'arites, too, were wrong in imagining that His Knowledge is eternal, and yet only comes into connection with the contingent thing at the moment it originates in time.

The view that has been ascribed to Plato[35] is likewise false in holding that His Knowledge—May He be exalted!—consists in self-subsistent essences and forms that are separate both from Him—May He be exalted (above such a defect)!—and from matter. Nor (can we accept) what has been attributed to Porphyry (which speaks) of His "unification"—May He be exalted (above that)!—with the intelligibles, at least if "unification" is understood in the way that most people do (that is, in the sense of conjoining two originally *separate* entities).

Nor can God's Knowledge (of particulars) be encompassed simply in a general, summary form, as some more recent thinkers rashly tried to argue (since general knowledge in no way implies knowledge of all individual instances). Rather, the truth (about the relation of general and particular knowledge) is as we have indicated and confirmed in a solid manner that is set forth in our more lengthy books.

But the most foolish theory of all is proposed by those who maintain that these very material forms—despite their being submerged in matter and mixed with all the privations and veils and shadows that necessarily follow from being in specific times, places, and positions—are (nevertheless) forms of knowledge present in Him—May He be exalted (above this)!—as His Knowledge. For it has been

[35] In using the phrase "ascribed to Plato," Sadra indicates his suspicion that Plato did not actually intend a dualistic separation of the Forms (or intelligible reality) from the divine Essence or Whole; his more usual respect for Plato's insight in this matter is exemplified by his remarks in II-A, §9 below. For the broader historical background of this controversy, see the survey by Wolfson cited at n. 32 above. As for Porphyry, Sadra actually acknowledges the correctness of his view on this subject in §10 (at n. 48) below; there he claims that the misunderstanding of the meaning of "unification" (*ittiḥād*) in this context was really the fault of Porphyry's critics and interpreters.

proven that this mode of shadowy and material being is veiled from itself by itself. So with regard to this (material) mode (of being), the presence (of a material thing) is precisely the same as its absence from itself; its coherence is the same as its separability; its unity is the same as its potential multiplicity; and its conjunction is the same as its divisibility. So tell me, then, you (so-called) "man of knowledge": if this material being, *qua* being, is by essence known to the Creator, present with Him in this form submerged in matter and spatial location—although this (material) form cannot even be grasped by sensation, not to mention imagination or intellection[36] —then how can the intelligible (form), insofar as it is actually intelligible, still be a material form and therefore susceptible of division into quantities and location in space?! For intellective (or noetic) being is a mode of being separate and different from spatial (material) being. Therefore it is impossible that the act of intelligence should be corporeal, or that the corporeal thing should be an intelligible.

So do not pay any attention to the words of whoever says that these generated, corporeal beings, although within their own limits corporeal and constantly changing, are nevertheless (eternally) fixed and unchanging intelligibles in relation to what is above them—that is, to the First Principle and the world of His Kingdom. This is (impossible) because the mode of something's being in itself does not change through a relation (that it may have to something else). The fact that something is material is an expression for [226] the (essential) characteristics of its being, and the materiality of a thing and its separation from matter[37] are not two attributes external to the essence of that thing. Similarly, the substantiality of a substance

[36] Later commentators have usually attributed the view attacked in this paragraph to Sadra's own teacher in Avicennan philosophy, Mīr Dāmād (d. 1040/1631). The theory alluded to here, in which all perception involves the (incorporeal) presence and existential union of knower and known is developed further in §10 (and throughout Part II-A) below.

[37] "Separation from matter" or "noncorporeality" are the usual (if still inadequately dualistic) translations of *tajarrud.* In reference to man and discussions of the soul (II-A and B below), the same term usually refers to the condition of "transcendence" in which the noetic, incorporeal mode of being is actually realized. Part II discusses various aspects of this reality, first in epistemological and then in eschatological language, while Part I outlines its ontological (and theological) framework; cf. the Introduction, V.

and its particular being are a single thing, and the accidentality of an accident and its (particular) being are likewise (a single different thing). So just as a single being cannot be both a substance and an accident, (simply) according to two points of view, neither can it be both material and separate from matter (simply) from two points of view.

However, if you were to say that these material forms are present in Him—May He be exalted!—through their Forms which are separate (and immaterial) by essence, and that in consequence of those Forms, these (material) things are also known in an accidental manner, then that view would be justified. For it has already been mentioned (in §6) that *What is with God* (2:89; etc.) are the primordial essential Realities of (all contingent) things, and that those things are related to *What is with God* as a shadow is related to its source.

§8. *Principle, concerning His Speech*[38]*—Glory be to Him!*

(God's) Speech is not, as the Ash'arites have said, an "attribute of (His) Soul" and the eternal meanings subsisting in His Essence—May He be exalted!—that they called the "speech of the soul." For His Speech is something other than a (pure) intelligible, or it would be Knowledge and not Speech.

But neither is His Speech (as the Mu'tazilites have argued) (merely) an expression for the creation of sounds and words signifying meanings, since in that case all speech would be God's Speech —May He be exalted (above such a view)! Nor does it help (as some Mu'tazilites have attempted) to restrict God's Speech to (that which is spoken) "in the intention of informing another on the part

[38] The ostensible background of this question, outlined in the first two paragraphs, was a famous (and sometimes violent) dispute between the Ash'arite and Mu'tazilite theologians concerning the created or uncreated nature of God's Speech (*kalām*), and in particular, of the Koran. Here Sadra—following Ibn Arabi, whom he quotes and paraphrases liberally in these sections—actually transforms that question, taking God's Speech (and a number of related Koranic symbols) to signify all immanent or determinate manifestations of Being. The philosophic problems raised in that context (such as those concerning the spiritual or material nature of the prophets, imams, and revealed scriptures, in relation to the eternal divine Word) are closely analogous to those involved in Christian discussions of the Incarnation and mystery of the Trinity.

of God" or "with the intention of their presentation on His behalf," since everything is from Him. And if (by these restrictions) they were intending a speech without any (human) intermediary, this would also be impossible, since in such a case there would be no sounds or words at all!

No, God's "Speech" is an expression for His establishment of Perfect Words[39] and the *sending down of definite Signs [—They are the Mother of the Book—] and others which are similitudes* (3:7), in the clothing of words and expressions. Hence His Speech is "*Qur'ān*" (that is, "joining," or the noetic Unity of Being) from one point of view and "*Furqān*" (that is, "separate," manifest reality) from another point of view.[40]

(As *Qur'ān,* or the inner noetic reality of Being and the *Mother of the Book*), God's Speech is different from the "Book," because the "Book" belongs to the world of (manifest) Creation:[41] *You* (Muhammad) *did not recite any book before This, not did you write*

[39] *Kalimāt tammāt* (*kalima = logos*). For Sadra, these are the noetic "Realities" (cf. n. 32) manifested or "sent down" in the fully realized beings—i.e., the prophets, imams, and "true knowers"—and ultimately, in all manifest beings. All the rest of this section is a paraphrase of parts of Ibn Arabi's famous *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* ("The Bezels of Wisdom"). Both the content (with the continual mixture of prophetology and ontology) and the jumbled, highly compressed style, with its sometimes far-fetched etymologies and interpretations of scriptural symbols, are quite typical of Ibn Arabi's writing; cf. the other extensive quotations (many of them unacknowledged) in II-C below. This type of writing, which is virtually incomprehensible without a guide or extensive commentary, is a sort of extreme illustration of the deliberately "esoteric" language discussed in the Introduction, III-E.

[40] This sort of serious wordplay (taking *q-r-n,* "to join," as the root of *Qur'ān,* rather than the linguistically accurate *q-r-',* "to read") and the ontological interpretation of scriptural language are typical of Ibn Arabi's *Fuṣūṣ*: cf. the discussion of these symbols in the commentary by T. Izutsu, *The Key,* pp. 267-268 and 51-53. The basic distinction here is between the noetic and manifest (psychic and physical) modalities of being, or between the eternally subsistent intelligible realm (the pleroma of "Perfect Words," "*Qur'an,*" "Mother of the Book," World of the Command, and so on) and its constantly changing material and psychic manifestations ("*Furqān,*" "Book," World of Creation, and so on).

[41] The contrast here between the "World of Creation" (*'ālam al-khalq*) and the "World of the divine Command" (*'ālam al-'amr*: cf. n. 43) was a traditional one among the Sufis, corresponding to the distinction already made (n. 40) between the manifest, material world ("*furqān,*" the domain of "separation") and the realm of noetic being ("World," "Speech," "*Qur'ān,*" and so on).

one with your right hand, for else those who would oppose (you) *might have doubted* (your purely divine inspiration) (129:48).[42]

For His Speech belongs to the World of the Command (that is, the noetic modality of Being),[43] and Its dwelling is the hearts and breasts (of mankind), as in His saying: *The Faithful Spirit brought It down upon your heart, with God's permission* (26:183-184; 97:4), and His saying: *Verily It is clear Signs in the breasts of those who have been given knowledge* (29:49). The "Book" (of manifest, contingent beings) can be perceived by everyone: *And We wrote down for him* (Moses) *upon the tablets the counsel to be drawn from every thing* (7:145). But God's Speech (that is, noetic Being) is [*a hidden Book*] *that can only be touched by those purified* (56:78-79) from the pollution of the world of man's mortal (animal) nature.

The *Qur'ān* was (God's) creation of the Prophet (that is, as the noetic pleroma or "Adam," the "Complete Human Being") before the "Book" (of contingent being). The difference [227] between the *Qur'an* and the "Book" is like that between Adam and Jesus. (Both were alike to the extent that) *the likeness of Jesus is with God as is the likeness of Adam: He created him from dust; then he said to him "Be!" and he comes to be* (3:59). But Adam is the Book of God, written with the *two Hands* (38:75) of His Power:[44]

[42] This verse was popularly taken as a reference to the "illiteracy" of the Prophet, a symbol whose doctrinal significance in Islam parallels that of the "immaculate conception" in Christology: in both cases, what is in question is the symbolic purity and incorruptibility of the paradigmatic vehicle of the divine Word. The interpretation here of Muhammad (in his universal spiritual aspect) as *himself* being the *Qur'ān* or Source of noetic revelation was not entirely new with the school of Ibn Arabi or even earlier Shiite speculations; it was at least partially implied, on the more practical plane, in the legally determinative status granted from earliest Islamic times to the (non-Koranic) words and actions making up the *sunna* or Tradition of the Prophet. For the more general philosophic dimensions of Sadra's (and Ibn Arabi's) prophetology, see the Introduction, III-A and VI-B.

[43] The "command" (*al-'amr*) referred to in this phrase is the divine creative "Be!" (*kun*) mentioned in a number of Koranic verses. In this context (as opposed to the "World of Creation": n. 41), the divine "Command" refers to the eternal subsistence of the intelligible "Realities" within the divine Essence —what Ibn Arabi customarily calls the "Most-holy Emanation" (*al-fayḍ al-aqdas*), as opposed to the "Holy Emanation" of the manifest, temporal, and material world. For a more detailed outline of these complex cosmological symbols in Ibn Arabi, see Izutsu, *The Key*, Index, s.vv.

[44] Sufis, including Ibn Arabi, usually understood Adam's (that is, mankind's)

You (O Adam) are the *Clear Book* (5:15; etc.)
Through Whose letters what was hidden appears.

Jesus (on the other hand) was His Saying, resulting from His Command (*Kun!* "Be!" and *His Word which He conveyed to Mary, and a spirit from Him* (4:171). That which was created by God's *two Hands* (38:75) is not to be likened in nobility of rank to that which came to exist through two letters (*k-n* of the divine Command "Be!"). So whoever maintains the opposite of this is mistaken.

§9. *Principle (deriving from) the Source of Illumination (concerning the union of God and His Speech in all beings: the "Breath of the Merciful")*[45]

The speaker is he through whom speech subsists. The writer is he who causes speech—that is, the book—to exist. And each of these has several levels. Every book is speech in some respect, and every speech is also a book in some respect, since every speaker is a writer in some way, and every writer is in some way also a speaker.

A visible image of that is the following: when you witness a man

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creation with God's "two Hands"—which according to this Koranic verse gave him superiority over all the angels—to refer to the unique "comprehensiveness" of human nature, which alone included all the realms of being, both spiritual and material; cf. the explanation at n. 280 below. The following verses are usually attributed to Ali, the first Shiite Imam, but their meaning in this context fits closely with the prophetology and cosmology of Ibn Arabi, for whom Adam (as the archetypal reality of Man, *al-insān al-kāmil*) is identical with the first hypostasis of the noetic Intelligence eternally emerging from the divine Essence. Cf. the opening chapter of the *Fuṣuṣ al-Ḥikam* and the commentary on these sections in Izutsu, *The Key*, Index, s.vv.

45 This chapter, which is a direct continuation of the preceding one, is an outline of Ibn Arabi's famous image of reality as the "Breath of the Merciful (God)" (*nafas al-raḥmān*), or the "ever-renewed creation" (*khalq jadīd*) of the manifest world at every instant. The same phenomenon is discussed by Sadra, in terms of his concept of the "transubstantiation" of all being (*ḥaraka jawharīya*) in §§12-16 immediately below, and in symbolic allusions (often borrowed from Ibn Arabi's interpretations) throughout II-C below; see the discussions of this question in V-B-2 and 5 in the Introduction. The uses of divine "Mercy" or "Compassion" (*raḥma*) in Ibn Arabi's symbolic lexicon are nearly synonymous with the complex role of "Being" in Sadra's language: for Ibn Arabi's usage, see the discussions in Izutsu, *The Key*, Index, s.v. The "Pen" and "Tablet" mentioned in this section are likewise Koranic expressions with a long history of cosmological interpretation prior to Sadra's time.

speaking, the form of letters and the shapes of speech arise from his breath in his chest, throat, and the other places that produce the sounds and letters; and his breath is from the one who causes the speech to be. So he "writes" with the "pen" of his power on the "tablet" of his breath, and ultimately on the places which produce the various sounds. He is the same individual through whom the speech subsists, so he becomes the speaker.

Now take this as an analogy for What is above it (that is, the eternal creative Self-manifestation or the "Breath of the Merciful"), and be among *those who speak wisely* (28:20; etc.) and do good, not among *those who quarrel among themselves* (50:28; etc.)!

§10. *Principle (deriving from) the divine Throne (concerning the unity of knower and known)*

Everything that is intelligible in its being is also actively intelligizing. Indeed, every form in perception—whether it be intelligible or sensible—is unified in its being with that which perceives it.[46]

The proof of this, emanating from God's Presence,[47] is that every

[46] For the central significance of this key principle of the ontic "union of knower and known" in relation to the rest of Sadra's philosophy, see the Introduction, V-A and V-B-3.

It should again be stressed (cf. Introduction, n. 68) that there is no adequate English equivalent for the key Arabic term *'aql* (*nous*) and its grammatical derivatives here. As with the equally difficult *al-wujūd* (*to on*), all the usual translations have historically developed a variety of connotations foreign to Sadra's intentions here. In this chapter we have used variants of "intellect" ("intelligible," etc.) because these fit the required Arabic grammatical forms. But it must be kept in mind that Sadra's main concern here is with the universal noetic modality of being (*nash'a*) or transcendent reality of pure consciousness, and not with the limited individual "mind" or mental faculties (*dhihn*). His focus here—and his main source of disagreement with the earlier Avicennan philosophers—is in the area of ontology, not psychology: cf. his more extended discussions of these issues in II-A and II-B below.

[47] This section is one of the clearest examples of what Sadra means by an "illumination" (nn. 10, 22) or inspiration from the divine "Throne" or "Presence" (nn. 1, 2, 11, 21); cf. the discussion of this crucial point in the Introduction, V-A and V-B-3. S.M.H. Ṭabā'ṭabā'ī, a contemporary commentator and editor of Sadra's works, has discovered a marginal note of Sadra's in an autograph copy of the *Asfār* recording the precise date (1037/1628) of the experience of "unveiling" that confirmed for Sadra the truth of this principle, which is one of the main foundations of his original philosophic work; see the translation by H. Corbin in his introduction to Sadra's *Mashā'ir*, pp. 2, 21.

form in perception—even if it is sensible, for example—has some sort of separation from matter, so that its being in itself and its being sensible are really only one thing and do not differ at all. Thus one cannot suppose that the specific form might have a mode of being with respect to which it would not be sensible, because its very being is a being *in sensation*—quite different from the being of the heavens or earth or anything else which is in external (material being). For the being of those (material) things is not in sensation, and they are grasped by sense or by the intellect only in an accidental manner and in consequence of a form in sensation corresponding to them.

Now if [228] this is so, then we can say of that form in sensation, whose being is precisely the same as its being sensed, that its being could not possibly be separate from the being of the substance which senses it. For if it had its being and the substance sensing it had another (different) being, and they only subsequently became connected in the relation of that which senses and that which is sensed, then this would be like the case of a father and son, each with his own essence and being independent of their relationship—yet who could be intellected in no way other than through (their relation of) fatherhood and sonship. But something like this is impossible in the case we are considering. For this form in sensation is not such that one could ever conceive of its having a being with respect to which it would not be sensible, so that its essence in itself would not be sensible. It is not like the (example of the) man who is not a father by the being of his essence in itself, but who only becomes a father through the accidental occurrence of a state of relation which happens to the being of his essence.

No, the essence of the form existing in sensation is sensible by its very essence. Therefore its very being is sensible by essence—whether or not there exists in the world a sensing substance which is separate from it. Indeed, even if we completely ignored everything else (but this form in sensation) or supposed that there did not exist in the world any separate sensing substance—even in that condition and under that supposition this form would still be sensible in essence. For its essence is sensible for itself, so that its essence in itself is at once the thing sensed, that which senses, and that which is sensed. This is because one of the terms of the relation (between that

which senses and that which is sensed), insofar as it is part of the relation, cannot be separated from its partner in their being, at any of the levels of (intensity of) that being. And the same rule holds for the status of the form in imagination or intellection with respect to its being identical with that which imagines or intelligizes.

One of the ancient philosophers (that is, Porphyry),[48] in speaking of "the unification of the intelligible and that which intelligizes," probably intended the same (truth) we have just confirmed. Those who criticized his approach and attacked him concerning this unification of the intelligible and that which intelligizes—and these include most of the more recent philosophers—did not penetrate to the crux of his approach and failed to grasp it properly. For they did not arrive at its source, the proof of which depends on the denial of the unification of two (originally separate) things. (Their mistaken conception of this "unification" would require) that there should exist in actuality two things different in number, which subsequently became a single existent. But this is something which is undoubtedly impossible.

It is not impossible, though, that a single essence (that is, the soul) might become so perfected and increase so much in the strength of its essence and the intensity of its stage (of being) that it could become in its essence the basis of something for which it was not previously a basis, and the source of things that had not developed in it before.[49] This is (not impossible) because of the great extent of (the soul's) field of being.

[48] This passage explains Sadra's criticism of the common misunderstanding of Porphyry's formula in §7 (n. 36) above. The background of this discussion is a long dispute, going back at least to Avicenna's time, between conceptions of intellection (or noesis: *'aql*) as a process of "conjunction" (*ittiṣāl*) and as a realization of ontic "union" (*ittiḥād*) between the human individual and the cosmic "Active Intellect" (n. 50 below). The first position was defended by Avicenna and most other Aristotelean philosophers. The second formula, reflecting a very different ontology (and practical concerns) was generally associated with the Neoplatonists and especially with the claims of certain Sufis, including the school of Ibn Arabi. Sadra's philosophy is largely an attempt to clarify the confusions underlying these different expressions and points of view. See the general outline of his position in the Introduction, V-A and V-B-3.

[49] This conception of the essential "creativity" of the soul (*khallāqīyat al-nafs*) is developed in greater detail throughout Part II below; its theoretical basis is outlined in II-A, §§3-6 and all of II-B. The references to the changing "intensity" and "extent" of the soul's being here are an important illustration of

The soul's unification with the "Productive (or Active) Intellect"[50] is nothing [229] but its becoming in its essence an intellect actually productive of forms. For the Intellect cannot be many in number (like corporeal things). Rather, it has another, comprehensive Unity that is not like that numerical unity which applies generally to the particular individuals of a species. The Productive Intellect, at the same time as It produces (or "brings into actuality") these souls which are connected with bodies, is also an End of perfection, ordering them, and an intellective Form for them, encompassing them all. And these souls are like delicate and subtle threads radiating from It to the bodies, and then returning to It when the souls become perfected and immaterial (or "transcendent").

But the (complete) verification of these topics would require a detailed discussion that cannot be contained in this treatise.

§11. *Principle, concerning His Names—May He be exalted!*

God—May He be exalted!—said: *And He taught Adam all the Names . . .* (2:31). And He—May He be exalted!—said: *And God's are the Most Lovely Names, so call Him by them . . .* (7:180).

Know that the world of the divine Names is a world of exceed-

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Sadra's key principle of the universal "transubstantiation" or "substantial motion" of being (*ḥaraka jawharīya*); cf. the references in the Introduction, V-B-4 and VI-A.

[50] *Al-'aql al-fa''āl*: this is the famous *nous poiētikos* of *De Anima* III, 7, which was accepted as the end (and ground) of human understanding and the order of the cosmos by virtually all medieval philosophers, although its interpretation varied immensely (cf. n. 46). It should be added that the "Active Intellect" here is basically identical (since Sadra gives little emphasis to any differences among the "separate intellects") to several symbols already encountered, including the "Lamp-niche of Prophecy" (n. 6), the "Perfect Words" (n. 39), the "Perfect Man" or "Adam" (n. 44), and the pleroma of archetypal noetic "Realities" (§§6-7). The problematic relation of this single Intellect to the manifest plurality of human souls, which Sadra briefly alludes to here, was the source of a number of central questions in medieval Islamic (and Latin) philosophy. Several of these, including the "unity" and "survival" of the intellect, its "preexistence," and the possibility of metempsychosis (*tanāsukh*), are considered in more detail in Part II below. The logic of this paradoxical "Unity" of the Intellect is mirrored in Sadra's account of the transcendent Unity of Being in the preceding chapters, especially §§1-4; cf. the Introduction, V.

ingly vast extent, containing all the essential Realities in their primordial and fully elaborated form. These are the *Keys of the Unseen* and the foundation of His detailed Knowledge of all existing things, as in His saying—May He be exalted!—*And with Him are the Keys of the Unseen; no one knows Them but Him* (6:59).

For there is nothing that is not to be found among His Names—May He be exalted! Their individual essences[51] exist through the Being of His Essence, in a manner more lofty and exalted (than the quiddities of contingent things). And They are necessary through the necessity of His Essence, just as the quiddity of a contingent thing exists through the being of that contingent thing and is made to exist accidentally, through (God's) granting of being—except that the Essentially Necessary (Being) has no quiddity, since He is the Pure Reality of Being, unmixed with any degree (of privation) with regard to which He might not (fully) exist.

This (knowledge of these Names) is part of wisdom withheld from all but those those who are worthy and specially deserving of its attainment, the perfect ones among the people of spiritual intuition and true inner knowledge.[52] These Names are not the words and expressions that can be heard ("God," "the Merciful," and so forth). Rather, these audible expressions are the names of these Names.

Those concerned with this knowledge verified and recorded a

[51] That is, their *a'yān* (sing. *'ayn*). This is Ibn Arabi's expression for the primordial archetypes or intelligible principles of things, subsisting within the divine Mind (*'aql*) as the first determinate stage of God's eternal Self-manifestation (*tajalli*); see the explanation in Izutsu, *The Key*, Index, s.v. Sadra uses this term as the equivalent for what he more commonly calls the Platonic Forms or noetic "Realities" (n. 32). The significance of his insistence on including these intelligible principles *within* God or Being (the main theme of §§5-11) was suggested in n. 32 and in the Introduction, V-B-3.

[52] *Ahl al-kashf wa al-'irfān*; this is one of Sadra's numerous allusions to the approaches of the accomplished Sufis and similar enlightened "knowers" (*'urafā'*); there are many more such examples in Part II. *Kashf*, the direct intuitive "unveiling" of spiritual reality within the "knower," is one of the basic terms in the lexicon of the Islamic mystics. *'Irfān* likewise refers to contemplative or intuitive awareness; it is derived from the same Arabic root as the key term *ma'rifa* (cf. Introduction V-A and VI-A). In the Persian Shiite setting—in which the term *taṣawwuf*, or "Sufism," has sometimes been unfavorably associated with Sunni Islam—the term *'irfān* has commonly been used to refer to those Islamic contemplative traditions of which Sadra's work is an important expression.

great many matters concerning it, following the philosophical order in the manner of the "official" (that is, "Peripatetic") philosophy,[53] according to principles, subjects, fundamental and subsidiary divisions, topics, and (particular) ends. For His Magnificent Names can be divided into substances and accidents, and the accidents into the nine categories of quantity, quality, place, position, [230] time, relation, state, action, and affection.

But the entirety (of these Names) are simple elements of the Intellect, existing through the One Being of the Essentially Necessary (Being). This (multiplicity in Unity) is among the wondrous marvels of the secrets of God's Grandeur.

§12. *Principle (concerning the mode of God's "Activity" in relation to the world)*[54]

The activity of every agent must be either by nature, by constraint, by subjugation, by intention, by immediate assent, by providential ordering, or by self-manifestation.[55] All but the first three of these

[53] The "official" or formalist" philosophy (or wisdom: *al-ḥikma al-rasmiya*) here refers to the Avicennan "Peripatetic" (*mashshā'ī*) tradition of Sadra's teachers, as opposed to the contemplative spiritual wisdom of the Platonic "Illuminationist" philosophers and sages (*ḥikmat al-ishrāq*). This usage, which Sadra took over from Suhrawardi, is discussed in the Introduction, III-C.

[54] Beginning with this chapter, Sadra takes up the theological question of the relation of God and the world, which he understands in terms of his key principle of the "transubstantiation" of all beings or "motion in substance" (*haraka jawhariya*). In fact, this subject (§§12-16) is simply another aspect of the transcendent "Unity" of Being, which was the main topic of the preceding chapters: see the discussion of these issues and their interrelations in the Introduction, V-B.

[55] Of the types of motion or activity summarized in this sentence, three are Aristotelean distinctions: motion by "nature" (*ṭab'*), "constraint" or "force" (*qasr*), and "intention" or "volition" (*irāda*). "Subjugation" (*taskhīr*), that is, willing or unwilling "submission" to constraint or persuasion, is presumably added because the Koran several times uses this term in referring to God's power over the heavens and the angels; it may also refer to the problem of the soul's control of the human bodily powers (§14 below).

'Ināya, translated here as "providential ordering," was the usual Arabic translation of the Greek *pronoia* (divine "forethought" or "providence"). Here it refers to the God-world relationship as understood by Avicenna and many of the Islamic "Peripatetics," involving the mediation of the divine intelligible order through an emanated series of immaterial intellects and celestial spheres and souls.

are completely involuntary. As for "subjugation," that can be either voluntary or involuntary.

Now the Maker of the world acts by nature, according to the (atheist) believers in an eternal and (purely autonomous) Nature; by intention with a motive, according to some of the (Mu'tazilite) theologians; by intention without any (separate) motive, according to most of the (Ash'arite) theologians; by immediate assent, according to the Illuminationist (philosophers); by providential ordering, according to the Peripatetic (philosophers); and by Self-manifestation, according to the Sufis. *Each one has a direction toward which he turns; let them strive to be first in attaining the good things* (2:148).

§13. *Principle (deriving from) the Source of Illumination, concerning the (continuous) origination of the world*

The whole world originates in time, since everything in it is preceded in its being by nonexistence in time. And everything in it is constantly renewed (in its being), in the sense that there is absolutely no ipseity or individual—be it celestial or elemental, simple or composite, substance or accident—but that its nonexistence precedes its being in time, and its being likewise precedes its nonexistence in time.[56] In general, every body and every bodily thing whose

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The Illuminationists (*ishrāqīyūn*), or followers of Suhrawardi, preferred the term *riḍā', divine* "good pleasure" or "immediate assent," to describe their conception of God's activity as more direct, continual, and unconstrained than the Peripatetic view seemed to suggest.

The term *tajall*, overflowing divine "Self-manifestation," is taken over from Ibn Arabi and other Sufis, as an expression for their vision of the universe (at all levels: cf. §9 above) as this ever-renewed "revelation" of Being. Although Sadra's concluding Koranic quotation here indicates that he sees some truth in each of these perspectives, his own philosophy—especially the key conception of *ḥaraka jawharīya* outlined in the following chapters (§§13-16)—is primarily an elaboration of the notion of beings as *tajalliyāt*. For Sadra's much more detailed treatment of all of these positions in the *Asfār*, see the outline in Rahman, *Philosophy*, pp. 74-93.

[56] This chapter condenses hundreds of pages of Sadra's theories of time, motion, creation, and other traditional problems of medieval Aristotelean natural philosophy; for more detailed accounts of the sections it summarizes from the *Asfār*, see Rahman, *Philosophy*, pp. 94-121.

These opening sentences are a summary, in the theological context, of the

being is in any way connected with matter is constantly renewed in its ipseity and impermanent in its being and its individuality.

(There is) a proof of this that appeared to us from God through reflection on several verses of His precious Book, such as His saying: *Verily they are in confusion concerning a renewed creation* (50:15); and His saying: *And We are not to be forestalled, in that We will exchange your likenesses and re-create you in what you will not know* (56:60-61); and His saying: *And you see the mountains, considering them solid, but they are passing by like the floating of clouds* (28:88). These and other verses allude to the ceaseless renewal and passing away of this (material) world and indicate its transience and finitude, as in His saying: *Everyone who is on it is passing away, but there remains the Face of your Lord, He of Majesty and Glory* (55:26-27); and His saying: *And the heavens* [231] *are rolled up in His Right Hand* (39:67); and His saying: *If He wishes, He will take you away and bring in a new creation* (14:19); and His saying: *Verily We shall inherit the earth and those who are upon it, and to Us they shall be returned* (19:40).[57]

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cosmic manifestation of *ḥaraka jawharīya* as the "continually renewed creation" of all beings (*tajaddud al-khalq*) at every instant. In that regard, the phrase "and its being likewise precedes its nonexistence" at the end of this sentence is very important: there is no question here of "creation" at some particular point in time. As we have stressed in the Introduction (V-B-2 and 4), these conceptions all refer originally to one aspect of the experience of transcendence (cf. especially II-C, §§4, 5, and 8), the reality Ibn Arabi had described as the eternal "in-flowing of Being" (*sarayān al-wujūd*) or "Breath of the Merciful" (*nafas al-raḥmān*: cf. §9, n. 45).

The reference here to the re-creation of the celestial bodies is an allusion to one of Sadra's important departures from the medieval Aristotelean cosmology; it is a point that he emphasizes at several other places below (cf. §16 and nn. 59 and 69). In his ontology, the status of the heavens, with regard to their "transubstantiation," is not essentially different from that of sublunar, elemental beings.

57 It must be kept in mind, both here and especially in the eschatological passages in Part II, that the Arabic terms translated here in the English future tense (according to the customary usage) could in most cases also be translated in the *present continuous* tense; this latter translation would correspond more closely at most points to Sadra's "esoteric," philosophic meaning. This type of intentional ambiguity was a common feature of both Sufi and Islamic philosophic writing long before Sadra's time: see the discussions in the Introduction, III-E. The most common source of Sadra's Koranic interpretations, including the allusions to the transubstantiation of being in this paragraph (cf. also II-C,

This proof is taken from the establishment of the continuous renewal of "Nature," which is a substantial form pervading every body and is the immediate principle of its motion and rest. There is no body that does not have this substantial formal (Nature) pervading the entirety of its parts. It is the immediate principle of (each body's natural) tendency (towards a particular motion), whether that be in potency or in actuality, circular or straight, and (if straight), toward or away from the center (of the earth).[58] It is forever changing and transforming and flowing (into particular forms) according to the substance of Its essence. Its essential motion of being (by giving being to all substances) is the Source of all motions in the accidents of place and position, and all changes in those of quantity and quality.

It is through this (universal motion or transubstantiation of being) that the Eternal is connected to that which originates in time —not through any of the other accidental motions (such as the rotation of the heavenly spheres, as in the prevailing cosmological theories).[59] For the ipseity of this Nature is such that It is cease-

§§4, 5, 8, etc.), is the writings of Ibn Arabi, which of course build on the contributions of many generations of earlier "knowers."

58 This sentence refers to the Aristotelean physical theory of the "natural places" and corresponding motions of the four sublunar elements and the "quintessence" or "ether" that was held to be the incorruptible material of the heavenly spheres. Here Sadra is simply using those motions as elementary examples, from the accepted physics of his day, of a reality that applies equally to all "substantial forms." His point is meant to be applicable to the substantiating principles of all natural entities—including the human soul (Parts II-A and B)—and does not itself depend on the truth or falsehood of any particular physical theory or rational account of these things; cf. the explanations in the Introduction, V-B.

59 This is one of the several criticisms in this section (such as at n. 56 above and in all of §16) of the prevailing Aristotelean-Ptolemaic cosmology, at least in its more metaphysical aspect. According to that conception—which formed the common background of Western thought as well until shortly before Sadra's era —the perfect and eternal motions of the heavenly spheres and planets, themselves governed by a number of immaterial intellects or "unmoved movers," served as the mediating point between the eternal, divine order and the vicissitudes of earthly (sublunar) existence. In this theory it was the motions of the heavens, together with the influences of their souls and intellects (cf. §15 below), that ultimately determined all sublunar happenings.

Sadra's principle of the transubstantiation of being, with its immediate relation of "God" and "world," does not openly attack the formal structure of this received geocentric cosmology. In fact, Sadra had little empirical impetus to

lessly being renewed and passing away, originating and ending. There is no cause (other than God) for Its continual origination and renewal, since what is essential in something is not caused by anything but its own essence. And the Maker, when He made (the essence of Nature) made Its essence to be continually renewed. This continual renewal is not made or acted upon or influenced by anything (other than God).

This is exactly like what the philosophers said concerning time, when they said that its ipseity was by essence such that it was continually being renewed, elapsing, and flowing. Except that we say that time (instead of having an independent reality) is the measure of this continual renewal and transformation.

The meaning of "motion" (in the real and primary sense) is this continual renewal of the state (of being) of a thing. The thing's emergence and gradual passage from potency to actuality (which is commonly called "motion") is only a relative, derivative abstract notion in the mind. For motion (in the primary sense) is precisely the continual renewal (of the being or substance of each thing). The above-mentioned emergence (of something from potency to actuality) is not that (true, substantial) motion through which (each being) is continually renewed and (thereby) emerges from potency to actuality.

The difference between these two (meanings of "motion") is like the difference between "being" in the sense of the derivative, abstract (concept) which is one of the (secondary) intelligibles in the mind, and "being" in the sense of that (reality) through which a thing actually comes to be and is kept from nonexistence.[60] (In

pursue any such innovations, and his writings seem to assume the general validity of that physical theory (cf., for example, II-C, at nn. 171 and 218 below). The essential point is that he denies any *dependence* of metaphysics (or theology) on this particular theory of nature. Instead, his metaphysics is explicitly grounded on that "true inner knowing of the *soul*" discussed in Part II below, an approach that explains both the centrality of the *ilāhīyāt*, or traditional metaphysical and theological topics, and the corresponding neglect of the standard Aristotelean studies of natural science in Sadra's more original philosophic writings. See the further discussion of this question in the Introduction, V-A and VI-A.

60 This basic distinction between the concept and reality of "being" was already the subject of §3 above. In a way, it is the determining principle of Sadra's thought: cf. the Introduction, II-A and V.

sum), that *through which* something emerges from potency into actuality is always the concrete individual making this passage, in whatever category (the motion may be). Just as it may be in quality or one of the other (categories of) accidents, so likewise it can be (motion in its) formal and material substance, as that is gradually transformed in its ipseity—not in its quiddity—with the continual renewal of its being.[61]

The proof that this "Nature" of corporeality is a substance whose being is (perpetually) flowing, continually renewed in its very essence and ipseity, is mentioned in a detailed and elaborate manner in (our book) *al-Asfār al-Arba'a* and in a separate treatise.[62] There we have recorded the agreement of the most ancient philosophers concerning the transience and passing away of the world and the continual renewal of everything (composed) of matter and form, and that every individual among the [232] natural bodies—be it celestial or of (the four sublunar) elements—originates in time.

As for the "natural universal,"[63] we maintain that it does not

[61] The clearest example of the transformation alluded to here (that is, in the actual "*formal* substance" of an individual) is the passage of the human soul from a complex of animal powers to pure noetic self-consciousness (the "intellect in actuality"), as described in II-A, §§2 and 7 (and elsewhere) below. Here the "ipseity" (*huwīya*), the actual individual substance (*jawhar*: *ousia*) or what something really is at each moment, is for Sadra precisely the same as its "being": cf. the related discussions in §§1-4 above. The "quiddity," according to this conception, cannot itself be transformed because it is not the actual form of the individual (that is, its *being*), but rather a static conceptual reality on the plane of "mental being," representing only one relative "point of view" (*i'tibār*) of the full reality of the being in question. See the discussion of these terms and their relations in the Introduction, V-B.

[62] On the *Asfār*, see the references in the Introduction, IV-A and B. The separate treatise mentioned here is the *Risāla fī Ḥudūth al-'Ālam* ("Treatise on the Origination of the World"), which is an excerpt of the long passages in the *Asfār* dealing with these cosmic dimensions of the transubstantiation and "continual re-creation" of physical being. In it Sadra attempts to show (mainly using doxographical material of Neoplatonic and Pythagorean provenance) that all the pre-Socratic philosophers and famous sages shared his own conception of this subject.

[63] *Al-kullī al-ṭabī'ī*: this is the universal considered "unconditionally" (*lā bi-sharṭ*), without regard to whether or not it is embodied in particular individuals. The alternative considerations, according to the traditional division in Sadra's day, were the "negatively conditioned" universal (*bi-sharṭ lā*), or the pure concept taken apart from all embodiments, and the universal "conditioned by (its actualization in) something" (*bi-sharṭ shay'*). For the history of the devel-

actually exist by its very essence, which is the well-known opinion of the philosophers, but rather by accident—(a position) opposed to most of the theologians (who deny it any existence at all). For the natural universal, by which I mean the quiddity (considered) without any condition (of whether or not it exists in a particular actual being), is neither eternal nor originated (taken by itself). Rather, its origination follows from the origination of its concrete individual instances, and its eternity likewise follows from their eternity. For taken simply by itself, it is not a particular individual thing which actually has being. So by itself it has no subsistence, even if all of its particular instances should come to exist. Indeed, it has no subsistence, whether by essence or accidentally, except (as a noetic Form) in God's Knowledge—May He be exalted!

Now as for souls *qua* souls (that is, insofar as they are connected with bodies, not in their noetic and purely immaterial aspect), their beings too are constantly being transformed and originating. Or their status is the same as everything else naturally embodied in matter, since the modality of their being is one of connection (with a body), and that being which is in connection (with a body) is transformed along with the transformation of the bodies that are connected with it. So the soul—as long as it is (merely) a soul—is unified with the body in its lower and less significant side, which is that of (material) Nature. But it also has potentially an intellective aspect and a loftier side which, if it should emerge from potency into actuality, can become pure Intellect, which is the Form of its species.[64]

And as for the absolutely separate (Intellect) and the immaterial

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opment of these concepts out of Avicenna's basic—and very problematic—distinction of existence and quiddity, see T. Izutsu, "The Problem of Quiddity and Natural Universal in Islamic Metaphysics." Sadra's treatment of this question here reaffirms his usual position denying any self-subsistent reality to quiddities (cf. §§1 and 2 above), while asserting their ultimate intelligible source in permanent modalities of the "Forms" or noetic "Names" in the divine Knowledge (§§5-11).

[64] On the question of the soul's potential substantiality as intellect, see II-A, §§2 and 7-10. More importantly, since the species of soul in question is not simply "man" as animal (that is, *bashar*), but also man *as intellect* or the universal noetic Reality (that is, the "Complete Man," *al-insān al-kāmil*), Sadra is actually alluding here to the path to all metaphysical knowledge—a point he goes on to make explicitly in the next paragraph (n. 65).

Forms, we must say something else (than the usual theories of the philosophers)—(namely), what is perceived by the inner knowing of the true "unitarians" who unveil (the inner reality and transcendent Unity of Being).[65] It is that these (intelligible Forms) do not have any being in themselves and that their essences are submerged and obliterated in the sea of Unicity (of the divine Essence or Being). They are the Forms of what is in God's Knowledge—May He be exalted!—and the veils of Godhood and the pavilions of His Grandeur. "Were it not for these luminous veils, the splendors of His Countenance would have completely consumed in flame everything in the heavens and the earth," as it is reported in the (Prophetic) tradition.[66] He—Glory be to Him!—has divine Modes and luminous Ranks that are not among the particular things of (this material) world and are not included in what is "other than God" —May He be exalted!—since they are Forms in the divine Decree and in the world of divine Lordship. These Forms are the *ecstatic angels* (59:23) who have never regarded their own essences, being

[65] *Al-muwaḥḥidūn al-kāshifūn*: these are the "knowers" who have experientially realized the true "Unity of Being" (§§1-11 above): cf. already §11 (n. 52) on the necessity of *kashf*, or the direct intuitive "unveiling" of this transcendent dimension of being. The words used to describe the relation of the Forms and Being (or the divine Knowledge and Essence) as seen from that perspective in the following sentences are actually standard technical terms from the school of Ibn Arabi. "Unicity" (*aḥadīya*) refers to the ontological level of the divine Essence considered before any implicit determination, or Being in its absolutely nonconditioned totality. "Godhood" (*ulūhīya*) refers to the comprehensive divine reality (signified as "God," *Allāh*: cf. II-C, §11, n. 256 below), or to Being considered at the level inclusive of all purely intelligible determination. The divine "Decree" (*qaḍā'*) likewise refers to the permanent manifestation of the Intellect within the whole of Being. "Lordship" (*rubūbīya*), finally, refers to particular aspects of the Intellect (that is, the noetic Forms or "Names") in relation to individual manifest beings: those Forms are the "Lords" (*rabb*) of their contingent manifestations. For the interrelationships of these and similar ontological terms from Ibn Arabi, see Izutsu, *The Key*, Index, s.vv.

[66] This is the concluding part of the famous "veils-tradition," which begins by mentioning that there are 70,000 (or 70, 77, or 700, in various versions) different veils of light and darkness between God and His creation. The different versions are quoted in B. Furūzānfar, *Aḥādīth-i Mathnawī*, pp. 50-51. That work is an especially helpful source in suggesting the broader Sufi background of Sadra's use of Prophetic and divine *ḥadīth*, both because it lists traditions not found in the early canonical collections, but widespread in Sufi literature, and because it often mentions citations of these same traditions in several standard Sufi works besides Rūmī's famous poem.

oblivious to them in their absorption in God, and whose own identities are dissolved in their being intellective rays and luminous effulgences of that First Light, subsisting through Its (Self-) Subsistence, not through Its Act of giving subsistence (to contingent beings).

This treatise cannot possibly contain the (full) exposition of this difficult and noble subject. Our intention here has been to indicate the (continual) origination of bodies and their forms and powers. As for the Intellect, we have not affirmed Its being (as something other than God, and hence originated)—and the theologians denied it. Thus there is no need for us [233] to discuss the manner of Its origination (as many earlier philosophers have done).[67]

§14. *Principle (on the relation of soul and body)*

The directly immediate agent that causes motion (or change), in all types of motion, is nothing but Nature. Nature is the essential principle of every motion, whether it be employed by the soul, as in voluntary motion; or when it is constrained by an (external) force, such as the motion by constraint when a rock is thrown upwards; or in some other form, as for example in what is called "natural" motion. For (all) motion is like a person whose spirit is Nature.

Now Bahmanyār[68] raised a difficulty, in accordance with his mas-

[67] This last sentence is apparently a reference to the complicated explanations of the emanation of the "First Intellect" (and subsequent "unmoved movers") from God in the writings both of earlier Aristotelean and Ismaili Shiite philosophers; a typical example of such a schema is that of Avicenna, described in the *Ishārāt* (Goichon translation), pp. 402 ff. Sadra also may have in mind here a number of gnostic theologies which had stressed the radical unknowability of the Godhead and Its strict separation from the Intellect, considered as Its first "creation." This line of speculative theology was evident in some early forms of Shiism, and is strikingly illustrated in the writings of Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī (see the references in the Introduction, III-F). The deeper grounds of Sadra's disagreement with this theological tendency are discussed in Chapter V-B-3.

The "theologians" (*mutakallimūn*) mentioned in the next to last sentence are those whose positions on this question were summarized (and criticized) in §5 above. Obviously, the fact that they did not consider the divine Knowledge as something "other" than God does not mean that Sadra fully agreed with their understanding of the Intellect and its relation to Being.

[68] Bahmanyār ibn Marzubān (d. 458/1066) was one of the foremost disciples of Avicenna. His major work, the *Kitāb al-Taḥṣīl* ("The Compendium"), was often used as a sort of textbook of the Avicennan system in later times.

ter (Avicenna), concerning motions caused by the soul: how is it (he asked) that in this case the (same) Nature is transformed so as to become the cause of motion in the bodily members against their (natural) demands in such a way that there is no tension, despite the contending pulls of the demands of the soul and the (natural) demands of the body? His problem can only be solved by (recognizing) that that nature which is subjugated to the soul in free obedience, and which is one of the soul's own powers which it employs and through whose intermediacy it performs the different actions of the body, is something other than that nature which exists in the (material) elements and separate members of the body. Indeed, this (nature proper to the soul) is a certain level among the stages of the soul, whereas that (nature) which remains in the body after its connection with the soul is cut off is something other than the one we just mentioned. Fatigue, tension, illness, (bodily) corruption, and the like only occur due to the resistance of this second (bodily) nature to obeying the soul, not to the nature proper to the soul itself.

The soul, therefore, has two natures subject to it, one of which emerges from its own essence, and the second of which belongs to the elements of the body. The first it employs by its free obedience, and the second against a certain resistance.

§15. *Excursus (on the unity of body and soul in the celestial spheres)*

On the basis of this (recognition that "nature" is also one of the powers of soul), it appears that the First Philosopher (Aristotle) was right in saying that the motion of the (celestial) sphere was natural and that its soul was naturally embodied in it. For it has been revealed to us through a luminous proof that the essence of the sphere, its nature, and its animal (imaginative) soul are one single thing in their being and individuality, differing only according to the three different states (of being in which they function).

The sphere itself has no separate (immaterial and purely intellective) soul. [234] Rather, it has an animal, imaginative soul which imitates and resembles the intelligible Form (of its archetype) and is connected to It as rays are connected to a (source of) light. The

(bodily) nature of the sphere is likewise connected with its imaginative soul in a way like the connection of a shadow with the thing that casts it.

But both the nature of the sphere and its animal soul, with the (limited imaginative) powers of knowing that they each possess, are (ceaselessly) perishing and passing away with the continuous renewal and inflowing (of their being). What endures of the sphere with God is a "Word" (that is, the *logos* or intelligible Form) permanently subsisting in His Knowledge, as in His saying: *What is with you is perishing, but what is with God is enduring* (16:96).[69]

§16. *Concluding Clarification (on the contingency of the physical cosmos)*

Now that you know that every sphere has a perishable (bodily) mover (that is, its animal soul) and a separate immaterial mover (that is, its intelligible Form) which is the aim of its motion, and that the directly immediate agent causing the heavenly motion is something essentially flowing and continuously renewed in its ipseity—it should be evident to you that this world is a realm of extinction, transience, and passing away, while the other world is a realm of stability, and that this realm and everything in it is dependent on that other realm.

(So it should be evident how it is) that *the heavens will be rolled up* (39:67), and *the planets will fall* (82:2), their movements will cease, and their lights will be extinguished. For when the Rising comes, *the sun will be covered up and the stars will be darkened* (81:1-2), and the spheres will cease their revolutions and the planets will arrest their motions. This is most surely happening, *there is*

[69] As already indicated (§13, nn. 56 and 59), Sadra here apparently changes the accepted medieval Aristotelean cosmology by demoting the heavenly bodies —usually considered much loftier than man, in view of their more perfect intellects and relative proximity to God—to essentially the same ontological status as all other creatures; their relation to God (or the noetic Intelligence), in Sadra's view, is apparently no more immediate than that of man. This should not be taken to mean that Sadra was denying the "eternity" of the heavens: cf. II-C, §15 below. As explained in §13 above—and more symbolically in §16— the "creation" or transubstantiation of all beings alluded to here is itself an eternal process or inherent aspect of all reality, something that is going on at every instant.

no doubt about it (22:7). But [*They will ask you about the Hour, when It will occur. Say:*] "*Knowledge of the Hour is with God*" (7:187)—May He be exalted![70]

[70] Again (cf. n. 57) it should be emphasized that the verbs translated in the English future tense here could equally well be read in the present imperfect, and that this latter translation actually corresponds better to Sadra's philosophic understanding of the resurrection as the noetic transubstantiation of all things, as that is realized in the immediate perception of the "true knower." Cf. the Introduction, V-B and VI-A, and all of Part II-C below.

PART II

Second Place of Illumination, concerning knowledge of the Return[71]

A. First Illumination, concerning the inner knowledge of the soul[72]

§1. *Principle (concerning the failure of earlier philosophers and the necessity of illumination in this area)*

Know that the inner knowledge of the soul is one of those extremely difficult (fields of) knowledge in which the philosophers—not to mention the mere dialecticians[73]—were exceedingly neglectful, de-

[71] The "Return" (*al-ma'ād*) refers to the eschatological symbolism of the resurrection and the Last Day (Part II-C) and to that self-awareness of the soul (II-A and B) which Sadra sees as the reality underlying those symbols. Together, this knowledge reveals and mirrors the ontological structure or "Origin" (*al-mabda'*: cf. n. 9) of all things, as outlined in Part I. See the Introduction, IV-B, on the relation of these two primary divisions in all of Sadra's comprehensive works, and Chapter VI on the "Return." For the meaning here of *al-mashriq* ("Place of Illumination") and *al-ishrāq* ("Illumination")—both key terms taken over from Suhrawardi—see nn. 10 and 22 above.

[72] *Fī ma'rifat al-nafs*: see the explanation of this formula in the Introduction, VI-A, and the discussions of the contrast between *ma'rifa* (enlightened inner knowing as a state of consciousness) and *'ilm* (conceptualized formal knowledge or science) at nn. 5 and 52 and in the Introduction, V-A. In the original Arabic, these words are a clear allusion to the famous saying usually attributed to the Imam Ali (and sometimes to the Prophet): "He who knows (*'arafa*) his soul (or 'self': *nafsahu*) knows his Lord." See Furūzānfar, p. 162.

[73] "Dialecticians" (*jadalīyūn*) is a technical term used by the Islamic philosophers (usually in a pejorative sense) to refer to those who argue from popularly accepted, but undemonstrated (and often false) premises. Here, as with many earlier Islamic philosophers (cf. Introduction, III-B and C), it is a veiled reference to those *mutakallimūn* or kalam theologians whose eschatological conceptions (and generally unphilosophic methods and intentions) Sadra attacks throughout Part II. By the "philosophers" (*falāsifa*), Sadra probably intends here more especially the "Peripatetic" commentators of Avicenna, whose shortcomings are criticized in a number of places (see, for example, §§9-11) below. He is evidently not referring here to Plato, Plotinus, Suhrawardi, and other philosophers who are praised below (for example, at §§9 and 10) for their more adequate understanding of the soul, drawn directly from the "Lamp-niche of

spite the length of their investigations, the power of their thought, and the frequency of their endeavors in this field. For this knowledge can only be acquired through illumination from the Lamp-niche of Prophecy[74] and through following the lights of Revelation and Prophethood [235] and the lanterns of the Book and the Tradition that has come down (to us) in the Path of our Imams, masters of guidance and infallibility, from their ancestor the Seal of the prophets—May the greatest of blessings and prayers of those who pray be upon him and upon the other prophets and messengers!

§2. *Principle (concerning the levels of the soul)*

The human soul has many levels and stations, from the beginning of its generation to the end of its goal; and it has certain essential states and modes of being. At first, in its state of connection (with the body) it is a corporeal substance. Then it gradually becomes more and more intensified and develops through the different stages of its natural constitution until it subsists by itself and moves from this world to the other world, and so *returns to its Lord* (89:27).[75]

Prophecy" (nn. 6, 74, 105), the inner source of the transcendent "illumination" of noetic consciousness.

[74] *Mishkat al-nubuwwa*: this expression (cf. nn. 6 and 105) is one of many symbols Sadra uses to refer to the universal "Intellect" (n. 50) or that noetic dimension of reality which is the source of those insights into the nature of Being outlined in Part I above. "Revelation" here translates *waḥy*, a term that refers specifically to prophetic inspiration and the actual divine Source of metaphysical insight: that is why Sadra calls it a "Light," as opposed to the indirect, often relatively obscure "lanterns" of written scripture, the "Book" and Prophetic "Tradition" (*sunna*). Those latter sources require an enlightened interpretation (*ta'wīl*) that can illuminate their original meaning and intention: cf. II-C, §14 below on the special role of the Imams in supplying that guidance.

"Guidance" (*hidāya*) and "infallibility" (*'iṣma*) are technical terms from Shiite imamology: *hidāya* refers to the necessary role of the Imams understood as the unique guides to the inner spiritual meaning of religious symbols and practices (cf. II-C, nn. 276 and 278 below); *'iṣma*—"sinlessness" or inner moral "purity"—refers to the special ontic status of the Imams (and prophets) as inwardly free of the sinfulness and moral fallibility ordinarily associated with man's animal nature. For the role of Sadra's philosophic understanding of the Imamate, see the scattered references in the text and notes below and the discussions in the Introduction, III-A and F and VI-B.

[75] This last phrase alludes to the famous Koranic verse (89:27-30), *O soul at peace, return to your Lord, well-pleased and well-pleasing! Enter among My*

Thus the soul is originated in a corporeal (state), but endures in a spiritual (state). The first thing to be generated in its state (of connection with the body) is a corporeal power; next is a natural form; then the sensible soul with its levels; then the cogitative and recollective; and then the rational soul. Next, after the practical intellect, it acquires the theoretical intellect according to its various degrees, from the rank of the intellect in potency to that of the intellect in actuality and the Active Intellect—which is the same as that "Spirit" of the divine Command which is ascribed to God in His saying: *Say: "The Spirit is from my Lord's Command!"* (17: 85).[76] This last degree occurs only in a very small number of individuals of the human species. Moreover, (merely human) effort and labor do not suffice to acquire it, since a certain divine attraction is also necessary for its attainment, as it is mentioned in the Prophetic tradition: "A single attraction from God outbalances all the efforts of men and jinn."[77]

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servants! Enter my Garden! as well as to the numerous other Koranic mentions of the soul's "Return" (*ma'ād*: cf. nn. 9 and 71) to its noetic Origin. The "soul at peace" (*al-nafs al-muṭma'inna*) mentioned here was understood by many Sufis as a reference to the paradisiac state of the fully enlightened consciousness; they considered it the highest stage in a standard typology of inner spiritual development beginning with the dominance of the "commanding" or carnal soul (*al-nafs al-ammāra*). The self-subsistence of soul in the "other world" of the imaginal and noetic modalities of being, briefly alluded to here, is the major subject of Part II-B below: cf. the explanations in the Introduction, VI-A.

[76] This summary of the powers and levels of the soul follows the standard medieval Aristotelean psychology, as outlined in Avicenna's system; the most accessible English account is F. Rahman's translation of the *De Anima* of Avicenna's *Kitāb al-Najāt* (an abridged version of the *Shifā'*), *Avicenna's Psychology*. Both here and in his longer works, Sadra retains most of the formal distinctions of the Avicennan facultative psychology (cf. II-C, §12 below), but inserts them within a radically altered ontological framework that reflects the very different sources and intentions of his primary concern with this subject. Cf. the Introduction, III-B and C and VI-A.

The identification in this passage of the "Active Intellect" (cf. n. 50) and the Holy Spirit (*al-rūḥ al-quds*), the vehicle of prophetic inspiration, was a common theme in medieval Islamic philosophy; but the relation between the two—and the corresponding roles of the philosopher, saint, and prophet—was interpreted in many different ways. Some of the important aspects of Sadra's interpretation have been discussed at a number of places in the Introduction (see especially VI-B).

[77] This allusion to the familiar phenomena of "grace" and individual predisposition on the spiritual way was a favorite among the Sufis: cf. the references (including Rūmī, Jāmī, and al-Ghazālī) cited in Furūzānfar, p. 119.

§3. *Principle (concerning the true nature of sensation)*

In an animate being, the first of the powers of the soul to develop from the perfumes of the world of the Unseen and the fragrances of the Kingdom[78] is the power of touch. This power is common to all animals and travels through the limbs by means of the vaporous spirit, and the forms it perceives are the initial forms of the four primary qualities and their like.[79] Next is the power of taste, for perceiving the forms of the nine primary tastes and their compounds. Then comes the power of smell, which perceives the forms of odors; it is more subtle than these first two powers.

But the most subtle and most noble of all the five (senses) are the powers of hearing and sight. And the power of sight, in relation to things seen [236] is more like something active than something receptive, while the relation of hearing to things heard is (relatively) the contrary.

[78] The divine angelic "Kingdom" (*malakūt*: cf. n. 8) and "world of the Unseen" (*'ālam al-ghayb*) mentioned here are originally Koranic expressions that had become standard technical terms among the Sufis for the incorporeal aspects of reality, both noetic and (as here) imaginal or psychic. The corresponding expressions for the lower realm of material, elemental being were the divine "Possession" or "Power" (*mulk*) and the "world of the Visible" (*'ālam al-shahāda*).

[79] The "vaporous spirit" (*rūḥ bukhārī: pneuma*) mentioned here (and in a number of subsequent chapters) is a subtle material power, part of the traditional Galenic physiology of Sadra's time. Its meaning is quite different from that of the divine "Spirit" (also *rūḥ*) or noetic Intellect mentioned in §2 (n. 76) above. Similarly, the account of touch and taste in terms of the "primary qualities" (moist/dry; hard/soft) and primary tastes, which combine to form all the variants of our experience, also reflects the prevailing Aristotelean and Galenic account of those senses. For a general outline of this physiology, which Sadra also assumes in several later passages, see the references in the three studies by R. E. Siegel, *Galen's System of Physiology and Medicine, Galen on Sense Perception,* and *Galen on Psychology, Psychopathology, and Function and Diseases of the Nervous System,* indexes under pneuma, taste, hearing, humours, etc. For the Aristotelean background of the theory of primary qualities alluded to here, see J. I. Beare, *Greek Theories of Elementary Cognition,* pp. 144-159 and 174-179.

As with Sadra's assumption of the geocentric cosmology (cf. Part I, §§13-15, nn. 56, 59, 69), it must be stressed that his primary concern here is ontological —concerning the nature and relation of material and intelligible being as such —and is not dependent on the validity of any particular account of natural phenomena. The "verification" (*taḥqīq*: cf. Introduction, II) of Sadra's metaphysical postulates does not turn on any particular physical theories or proofs.

What are perceived by the five senses, as we already indicated in the case of touch, are luminous hidden images existing in another world; they are not those qualities (of material things) usually called "sensibles," except in an accidental fashion. For (in essence) they belong to the class of qualities peculiar to the soul.

Indeed, if you want to know the truth, these powers do not subsist in the (bodily) organs, but rather the organs subsist through them. For the proof is conclusive that when something inheres in something else (as the senses in the bodily organs), such that the being of that first thing in itself is the same as its being in that in which it inheres, then it is impossible for its own being to be in one world and for the being of that in which it inheres to be in another world. Therefore (in this case) the inhering thing and that in which it inheres are in one world, so that which perceives and that which is perceived are of one mode (of being). Thus, for example, the heat which is felt *in essence* is not what is found—for example, fire—in the body which is adjacent to the (touching) organ, nor even what is in the heated and so-called "touching" limb. Rather it is in another form, hidden from this world, occurring in that state of being proper to the soul, which perceives it through its power of touch.

The same is true for the rest of the things sensed, and likewise for what lies above them. In this there is a secret.[80]

§4. *Principle (concerning the inner senses of the soul)*

The soul in its essence has hearing, sight, smell, taste, and touch other than those which are ordinarily exposed. These (external senses) may become inoperative through disease, sleep, unconscious-

[80] *Sirr,* a mysterious "secret" or the "innermost core" (of one's being), is a common Sufi and Koranic term with a wise range of connotations. Here "what lies above" the things sensed is the realization of, first, the ontological subsistence of psychic reality as a whole (including the "sensibles") as a creation of soul (§§4-7), and second, the dependence of the phenomena of soul on generative intelligible principles or archetypal Forms (§§8-9). Sadra indicates that these realizations are "secret" not because they are esoteric theories or beliefs, but because they are realizations attainable individually only through the methods of "purification" (*tajrīd*) and disciplines leading to an immediate experience of the transcendence of soul.

ness, chronic illness, or death, while those (inner) senses do not cease their activity.

The external senses are veils and coverings over these (inner powers proper to the soul), which are the root of those passing (external perceptions). In this, too, there is a secret.[81]

§5. *Principle (concerning the true nature of vision)*

Vision does not occur through the emission of visual rays from the eye, as the mathematicians maintained. Nor is it caused by the impression of phantasms from the visible object on the crystalline membrane of the eye, as the natural philosophers held.[82] Both of these views are untenable, for many reasons which have been mentioned in other (scientific) books.

It is likewise impossible that vision should occur through the soul's direct witnessing of a form external to the eye and subsisting in matter, which is the well-known position of the Illuminationist philosophers and has been approved by a group of more recent thinkers [237] such as Alfarabi and Suhrawardi. We have mentioned the reasons for the falsity of this theory in our commentary on (Suhrawardi's) *Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq* ("The Philosophy of Illumination").[83] Among my objections is that what is in the external mate-

[81] For the "secret" (*sirr*) alluded to here, see n. 80 above. It should be stressed that in this section Sadra does not mean to imply the actual existence of two different sets of senses or "objects" of sensation. What veils the ontic reality and unity of soul is precisely the normal—and functionally indispensable!—appearance of "outer" and "inner" worlds, along with all the deeper assumptions and mental constructs underlying and surrounding that familiar point of view. The "secret" revealed in the experience of transcendence is therefore apparently paradoxical and necessarily inexpressible in the common language appropriate to that usual dualistic perception of being: see the Introduction, II and V-A and B.

[82] These two theories of vision were continually disputed throughout Hellenistic and medieval times. For a summary English account, see D. Lindberg, *Theories of Vision from al-Kindi to Kepler*, pp. 1-86. Here the category of "natural philosophers" (*ṭabīʿīyūn*) refers specifically to the Islamic Aristotelean tradition (including Avicenna, Averroes, and so on), while the "mathematicians" in this instance would include such famous figures as the philosopher al-Kindī and the scientist al-Bīrūnī (d. 442/1050).

[83] See Sadra's *Taʿlīqāt* (the commentary referred to here), pp. 268-274; §§8 and 11 below, as well as some passages in Part II-C, are also taken in part from

rials (of physical objects) is not the sort of thing that can be connected in essence with perception, nor can it be present immediately in perception and have being in consciousness.[84] Another objection is that this connection (which they posited between the act of vision and an externally subsisting material form) cannot be, since the relation between what has no position (that is, the soul's act of vision) and something having material dimensions (that is, the "object" of vision, in their theory) is impossible except by means of something having position. So that even if one should suppose the validity (of their theory of vision) through an intermediary (between the soul and the material object of vision), the relation would not be one of illuminative knowledge,[85] but rather a material and spatial one, since all the activities of material powers and everything which they undergo must be in a spatial location.

Rather, the truth about vision—as God has shown us by inspiration—is that after the fulfillment of certain specific conditions, with God's permission, there arise from the soul forms suspended (from their noetic archetypes),[86] subsisting through the soul, present

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sections of this immense commentary. It should be noted that Sadra's criticisms here (as at §11 below) concern relatively minor inconsistencies in Suhrawardi's thought (although ones that could lead to major misunderstandings), and that he in fact assumes the general validity of Suhrawardi's approach and borrows many of his key epistemological terms (cf. nn. 84-86). For a further discussion of these criticisms of Suhrawardi, see the Introduction, III-B and C. As already mentioned (n. 79), Sadra's primary concern here is to clarify the *ontological* implications of Suhrawardi's theory with regard to the true nature of soul; he does not claim to outline an adequate alternative account of vision (or any other sense) on the level of physical or psychological theory.

[84] The final words of this sentence (*idrāk ḥuḍūrī wa wujūd shu'ūrī*) are taken over from Suhrawardi's technical vocabulary, as is the central conception of "presential knowing" (*'ilm ḥuḍūrī*: cf. Part I, §10 and Introduction, V-B-3) which they express. This is simply one manifestation of the view (already outlined in Part I, §10) that all "knowing" or consciousness—including the activities of sensation and imaginal perception—entails the ontic union of what we call "knower" and "thing known."

[85] The terms "illuminative knowledge" (*'ilm ishrāqī*) and "illuminative relation" (*iḍāfa ishrāqīya*), explained in the following paragraph, are again taken over from Suhrawardi.

[86] The expression "suspended forms" (*ṣuwar mu'allaqa*: cf. n. 168), again borrowed from Suhrawardi, refers to the ontological status of the psychic forms perceived in sensation and imagination, as being derived from and dependent on the purely intelligible Forms or "Platonic archetypes" (*al-muthul al-aflāṭūnīya*). Sometimes these intermediate, imaginal forms at the level of psychic

in the soul, and appearing in the world of the soul—not in this (material) world. Ordinarily, people are heedless of this and claim that perception is connected with these forms submerged in matter. But what we actually attain in the state of vision might most suitably be called an "illuminative relation," because both terms of the relation (that is, the soul and the form perceived) exist through a being that is luminous in essence. Indeed, you have already learned that the forms in perception all exist in another world.

Verily there is a message in this for a people who worship (their Lord)! (21:106).

§6. *Principle (concerning the substantiality of the world of soul)*

In man, the imaginal power is a substance transcending[87] this world, that is, the world of physical beings and the motions and transformations of material things. We set forth decisive proofs about this matter in (our book) *al-Asfār al-Arba'a* ("The Four Journeys").[88] But this power is not (totally) separate from generated being, since in that case it would have to be (pure) Intellect and object of intellection.

Rather, its being is in another world, one that corresponds to this (physical) world in that it comprises heavens, elements, different species of plants, animals, and so on—only multiplied many times

reality are simply called "images" (*muthul*)—but it is important to note that for both Sadra and Suhrawardi they are primarily and originally "images" of the noetic Forms, and not abstractions from material existents (as in the accepted Avicennan epistemology). This conception of soul as itself the "imaginal world" (*'ālam al-mithāl*) intermediate between the physical and noetic realms of being was a major theme in Islam before and after Sadra's time: cf. the wide range of interpretations selected and translated by H. Corbin in *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth*, pp. 109-331.

87 *Jawhar mujarrad*: Sadra's understanding of soul as a "transcendent" (or "immaterial") substance is the key to his ontology and his primary point of departure from the Avicennan conception: cf. the Introduction, V-A and B and VI-A. For Avicenna, the "imaginal power" (*quwwa khayālīya*) was an individual psychic faculty concerned with manipulating the phantasms or abstracted images of material entities. Sadra here uses the same term very differently, to refer to "soul" as a distinct, universal, and self-subsistent "world" or modality of being, more comprehensive and extensive than physical reality.

88 On the importance of the *Asfār*, see the Introduction, IV-A and B. Sadra's arguments there concerning psychology and epistemology are summarized in Rahman, *Philosophy*, pp. 195-265.

over (the things of) this world. Now everything that man perceives and sees directly by means of his imaginal faculty and his interior sense does not at all inhere in the body of the brain or in some power inhering in that area (as maintained by Avicenna and Galenic physiology); nor is it located in the bodies of the heavenly spheres or in a world separated from the soul, as [238] some followers of the Illuminationist (philosophers) have maintained. Instead, it subsists in the soul—not like something inhering in something else, but rather like an act subsisting through its agent.

Now these forms present in the world of the soul may differ in manifestness and hiddenness, in intensity and weakness. The stronger and more substantial the power of this imaginal soul—(which is to say), the more it returns to its own essence and the less it is preoccupied with the distractions of this body and the use of the bodily powers of motion—the more manifestly will these forms appear in the soul and the stronger will be their being. For when these forms have become strengthened and intensified, there is no proportion between them and the things existing in this (physical) world so far as the intensity of their being, actualization, and certainty of effect.[89] It is not true, as is vulgarly supposed, that these forms are mere phantom images without the regular effects of real being, as is the case with most dreams. For in sleep, too, the soul is usually preoccupied with the body.

The complete manifestation of these forms and the perfection of the power of their being occurs only after death. (This is true) to such a degree that compared to the forms man will see after death, the forms he sees in this world are like dreams. This is why the Commander of the truly faithful (the Imam Ali)—Peace be with him!—said: "Mankind are sleeping; when they die, they awaken." Then the Unseen becomes directly visible, and knowledge becomes immediate vision.[90] In this is the secret of the "Return" and the resurrection of the body.

[89] The conception of the ontic autonomy and self-subsistence of psychic (or "imaginal") reality alluded to here is applied to eschatological symbols in §§10-11, and more fully in Part II-B below. Similar notions had been used by Suhrawardi, Ibn Arabi, and others, to explain the miracles of the prophets and the impossible wonders (*karamāt*) performed by some of the accomplished "knowers": see the representative passages translated by H. Corbin in *Spiritual Body*, pp. 135-143.

[90] For references to this well-known saying of Ali, extensively commented by Ibn Arabi and many other Sufis, see Furūzānfar, pp. 87 and 141. "Death" here,

§7. *Principle (concerning the soul's relation to the body)*

The "soulhood of the soul"[91] is not a relation accidentally occurring to its being, as the commonality of the philosophers claimed in likening its relation to the body to that of a ruler to his city or of a captain to his ship. No, the soulhood of the soul is nothing but its mode of being—not like the relation of ruler, captain, father, or anything else that has its own proper essence and only falls into relation with something else after already being in that essence. For one cannot conceive of the soul's having being—so long as it is soul (and not pure Intellect)—except for a being such that it is in connection with the body and utilizing the bodily powers, unless . . .

Unless it should become transformed in its being and intensified in its substantialization to such a degree that it becomes independent in its own essence and able to dispense with its connection to the physical body. Then *he shall return* [239] *to his people rejoicing* (84:9). Or *he shall be burned in a blazing Fire* (111:3).[92]

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as throughout the *'Arshīya*, is equivalent to spiritual "rebirth" or noetic resurrection through the realization of transcendence. For the standard opposition of the "unseen" and "visible" worlds (*'ālam al-ghayb/al-shahāda*), see n. 78 above. The concluding contrast here between conceptual knowledge (*'ilm*) of the soul and "immediate vision" or existential "identity" (*'ayn*) with the reality itself is an allusion to a famous passage in the Koran (102:5-7); the verses of that chapter dealing with the stages of inner experiential certainty (*yaqīn*) of the other world had been meditated and commented upon by generations of Sufis. The underlying distinction is basically that of *'ilm* and *ma'rifa*, which has been alluded to several times above: cf. nn. 5, 52, 72, and Introduction, V-A.

The "secret" (*sirr*) of the Return mentioned in the last sentence here is the same as that alluded to in the conclusion of §§3 and 4, nn. 80 and 81 above.

91 *Nafsiyat al-nafs*: literally, the "soulhood of the soul," or "what it is to be soul." Sadra's understanding of the soul here is another manifestation of the universal process of transubstantiation of being or "substantial motion" (*ḥaraka jawharīya*) introduced in Part I, §13 above. His repeated emphasis in Part II-A on soul's actual concrete "being" (*wujūd*) is especially important: what is in question is not a concept or definition of soul, but the actual living reality. The process of "substantialization" (*tajawhar*) alluded to in the second paragraph is the gradually increasing awareness of soul—and "self" (the Arabic *nafs* includes both meanings)—as a reality intrinsically subsuming and transcending the bodily "state of being." Sadra, following Ibn Arabi and many earlier Sufis, considers this revelation of the transcendent nature and reality of the soul/Self as the primary referent of the eschatological symbols discussed in the rest of Part II: cf. Chapter VI of the Introduction.

92 In a number of later passages, Sadra interprets the Koranic "Fire" (or "Hell": the Arabic *al-nār* conveys both meanings) as referring to the constantly changing material (spatiotemporal) modality of being, or to the soul that per-

Verily there is a message in this for a people who worship (their Lord)*!* (21:106).

§8. *Principle (concerning the pre-existence of soul)*

The "Adamic" soul has a form of existence preceding the body, without this entailing the transmigration of souls,[93] and without necessitating the pre-eternity of the (individual) soul, which is the well-known view of Plato. This (mode of pre-existence) does not require a multiplicity of individuals of a single species or their differentiation without reference to any matter or (material) preparedness; nor does it entail the soul's being divided after having been one, in the manner of continuous quantities; nor does it presume the soul's inactivity before (being connected with) bodies. Rather, (soul's pre-existence) is as we have indicated and explained in our commentary on *Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq* (Suhrawardi's "Philosophy of Illumination") in a way that cannot be surpassed, (so that here we shall offer only scriptural allusions).

It is to this (noetic pre-existence of soul) that His saying—May He be exalted!—refers: *And when your Lord took out from the loins of the children of Adam their descendants, and caused them to bear witness against themselves,* (saying) *"Am I not your Lord?" they said: "Indeed (You are)!"* (7:172).[94] Similarly with the Pro-

sists in identifying itself with the transient forms and passions of a particular body. The phrases "become transformed" (at the beginning of this paragraph) and "shall return" translate the same Arabic verbal root, *inqalaba*: what is involved, in either case, is an "overturning" or "conversion" of the self which is at the same time a "return" (cf. n. 71) to its noetic Source and true reality.

93 As Sadra indicates below, the issues raised in this opening paragraph are discussed at much greater length in his *Ta'līqāt* (the massive commentary on Suhrawardi), pp. 476-496. On the "Adamic" soul, which is the same as the Intellect (*'aql*) or noetic dimension of Being, see the references at nn. 44 and 94. The doctrine of metempsychosis (*tanāsukh*) or the transmigration of souls, in its most literalist interpretation as successive reincarnations in the bodies of animals and lower forms of life, was rejected by almost all Islamic schools of thought. In more refined form, however—particularly with regard to phenomena on the plane of human souls and experiences—the theory had a continuing fascination for all groups, whether Sufis or more Platonic philosophers, concerned with the transtemporal dimensions of soul and the ultimate unity of the Intellect (n. 50): the conceptualization of those problems raises the philosophic dilemmas outlined in this opening paragraph.

94 This famous verse and related Koranic passages concerning Adam were pri-

phetic tradition: "The spirits (of men) are armies drawn up in ranks: [Those who recognize one another are in harmony, and those who dislike one another are in disagreement]."[95]

And likewise (this saying) from Abū 'Abdallāh (the Shiite Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq)—Peace be with him!: "God created us from the Light of His Majesty and Grandeur. Then He fashioned our created form from Clay concealed underneath the divine Throne, and caused that Light to dwell therein. So we were all men of Light, and He created our party [*shī'a*] from our Clay." And the following statement of Abū 'Abdallāh is related by Muḥammad Ibn Bābawayh—May God have mercy on him!—in his *Kitab al-Tawḥīd* ("Book of the divine Unity"): "God—May He be exalted and glorified!—created the truly faithful from the Clay of the Gardens [of Paradise] and caused His Spirit to flow into them." And from Abū Ja'far (the Shiite Imam Muḥammad al-Bāqir)—Peace be with him! —he related something similar: "God created the truly faithful from the Clay of the Gardens and poured into their forms the breeze of the Gardens." From Abū 'Abdallāh (it is also related): "The truly faithful are brothers, since their spirits are from the Spirit of God—May He be exalted and glorified! Indeed, the spirit of the truly faithful [person] is more intensely connected to the Spirit of God than the connection of the sun with its rays." The traditions handed down on this subject by our fellow (Shiites) are so innumerable that it is as though the existence of the spirits prior to (their) bodies were one of the essential premises of the Imamite (Shiite) school—May God's pleasure be with them![96]

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mary sources for the central theme of the pre-eternal "covenant" of God and man in Ibn Arabi and many other Sufi writers. That theme—including the related subjects of man's innate metaphysical perfection and longing for that state of primeval wholeness—recurs throughout the Sufi poets (as well as in more theoretical writings), expressed in a profusion of interrelated symbols. It should be stressed that in Islam—and particularly in the Sufi interpretations of these themes—the primary focus on the figure of Adam was not with regard to the Fall (much less any notion of "original sin"), but rather on Adam's role as first of the prophets and the archetypal locus of divinely inspired metaphysical wisdom. Sadra, following Ibn Arabi, usually emphasizes the symbolic figuration of Adam as the "Perfect Man," the source and first manifestation of mankind's potential noetic perfection.

95 For the sources of this tradition, widely quoted by Sufi authors, see Furūzānfar, p. 52.

96 Several of these sayings are also discussed by Sadra in his *Mashā'ir*, pp. 59-63

§9. *Principle (concerning the psychic and intelligible "Man" and the theory of Forms)*

In the interior of this man created from the elements and the natural bodies there is a Man of soul, intermediate (between the physical and the purely noetic worlds),[97] essentially alive—a Man who is thus in all of his organs, senses, and powers. This Man exists this very instant. His Life is not like the life [240] of this body, which is accidental and occurs to it from the outside; rather, He has Life by his very essence. And this Man of soul is a substance intermediate in being between the physical man and the Man of (pure) Intellect.

This is similar to the position taken by the Master of the philosophers ("Aristotle"—actually Plotinus) in the book *Ma'rifat al-Rubūbīya* ("Knowledge of the Divine Lordship," the famous *Theology of "Aristotle"*).[98] For he said: "In the bodily man there is the

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(translation, pp. 204-208). There he identifies this divine and pre-existing Light-aspect of the soul with the realm of the "Universal Spirits" and "Sacred Intellects," that is, with that noetic dimension of Being which is the metaphysical reality of the prophets, imams, and "Perfect Man." Cf. Part I, §8 and the Introduction, V-A and V-B-3; for the identity of this "Spirit" and Nous or the divine Intellect, see §2, n. 76 above.

In these sayings, the term *al-ṭīna,* "Clay," is a key metaphysical symbol for the spiritual substance of the Imams and their true followers: see the extensive discussion of these and related traditions by D. Crow, pp. 135-139, in his "The Teachings of Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, with Reference to His Place in Early Shiism." This is the best available introduction to those particular strands of esoteric Shiite tradition which were most influential in Sadra's own writing. The "truly faithful" person *(al-mu'min)* mentioned in several of these sayings is the one who possesses true philosophic wisdom and spiritual insight *(īmān)*; for the meaning of this key term in Sadra's thought (which differs radically from the usual connotations of "faith" in English), see n. 9, the Introduction, V-A, and nn. 228 and 229 below.

97 The word translated here as "intermediate" *(barzakhī)* is originally a Koranic term (23:100; etc.) with the basic sense of a "barrier" or "boundary." Sadra's usual understanding of this *barzakh* as the modality of being of "soul," intermediate between physical and purely noetic reality, is a technical usage taken over from Ibn Arabi.

98 The two passages of the *Theology* quoted in this chapter correspond to the Badawī edition, *Aflūṭīn 'inda al-'Arab,* pp. 146 and 144; they paraphrase portions of the *Enneads,* VI, vii, 6 and 5.

The denomination of "Aristotle" as author of the *Theology* (as well as a wide range of other apocryphal hermetic and Neoplatonic texts) does not appear to have seriously misled any Islamic philosophers; the radical differences of style

Man of soul and the Man of Intellect. By this I do not mean that this bodily man is those two, but rather that he is connected with them and that he is an image of them—that is, that he performs some of the activities of the Man of Intellect and some of the activities of the Man of soul. This is because the characteristics of both of these—that is, of soul and of Intellect—are in the bodily man, except that they are in him only rarely, in a weakened and diminutive way, since he is the image of an image." In another place in that book he said that "this [bodily] man is only an image of the First, True Man." He also said that "the powers and life and states of this [bodily] man are weak, while in the First Man they are exceedingly strong. The First Man has strong, clear senses that are more powerful, clearer, and more manifest than the senses of this [bodily] man because, as we have said several times, those of the bodily man are only their images."

Know that the approach of this great man ("Aristotle"/Plotinus) includes the affirmation of an intelligible man, horse, and all the other species of plants and animals; of an intelligible Earth, Hell, true divine Paradise, and the *loftiest Heavens* (20:4); of all the other separate (noetic) divine Forms and specific Natures existing in God's Knowledge and the world of His Decree, the forms of manifestation of His Names that endure with God through His enduring —since none of these (Forms or Names) has an independent being, but rather are all modes of the divine Essence and the veils of the divine Lordship.[99] This was precisely the approach of his teachers, Plato and Socrates, concerning the Forms.

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and content between it and the rest of the acknowledged Aristotelean corpus were obvious from even the most cursory comparison. A conspiracy of silence about this misattribution helped maintain a politically useful appearance of unity among philosophic schools vis-à-vis the common threat of theological literalism. Thinkers in the stricter "Peripatetic" *falsafa* tradition, such as Alfarabi, occasionally used the *Theology* to defend Aristotle's sometimes suspect orthodoxy on points of theological controversy, such as the "creation" of the world. On the other hand, more Platonic philosophers, such Sadra and Suhrawardi, found the confusion helpful in lending Aristotle's authority to their own metaphysical positions. See, for example, Sadra's own ironic remarks at the end of this chapter about Avicenna's apparent inclination to attribute the *Theology* to Plato rather than Aristotle, and his denomination of its author as an enlightened "knower" (*'ārif*) at the end of II-C, n. 301 below.

99 In this paragraph, both the inclusion of the intelligible realm within the divine Essence (cf. I, §§5-12 and especially n. 32) and the particular theological

But the author of *al-Shifā'* ("The Healing [of the Soul]," Avicenna's magnum opus) did not find it easy to comprehend this subject or to follow this path, so that he began to criticize this talk of the being of Forms and to attack Plato and Socrates on this subject quite vehemently. It is as though he had never looked at the *Theology,* or as though [241] he had attributed it not to Aristotle, but rather to Plato! And in general, this question is one of the most obscure and difficult in all philosophy, one in which *he who is granted wisdom has been given a great good* (2:269). Indeed, no philosopher since the era of the ancient, original ones has been able to arrive at a profound understanding of this topic and to correct it in view of the criticisms and doubts (directed against it)—unless it be someone (that is, Sadra himself)[100] from this "blessed community," praising God and giving thanks for His bounty and His grace!

§10. *Principle (concerning the soul as "spiritual body")*

Individual mortal men[101] in this world form a common species falling under a single definition of the species, composed of the proxi-

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symbolism used to paraphrase the *Theology* are actually taken over from Ibn Arabi, rather than Plotinus. For the "Forms" and divine "Knowledge" and "Names" as aspects of the noetic Intellect, see I, §§5-11 above; for the divine "Decree" and "Lordship" and the famous "veils-tradition" alluded to here, see the explanations at n. 66 and Izutsu, *The Key,* Index, s.vv.

100 A considerable section of Sadra's longer works, including the *Asfār* and the *Shawāhid,* is devoted to a detailed defense of the reality of the Forms, against the standard Aristotelean criticisms that were collected in Avicenna's *Shifā'.* The phrase "blessed community" in this concluding sentence may recall the following Prophetic tradition (Furūzānfar, pp. 32-33): "My community is a blessed community; it will have no punishment in the Hereafter, but its punishment in this world is killing and disorders and calamities."

101 Here and in many other places (e.g., n. 110 below), Sadra uses the Arabic term *bashar* ("mortal man" or "mere mortal") to refer to man's physical or animal aspect, to the particular physical form of the human species and the capacities men have in common with other animals. In contrast, the term *insān* (and its adjectival forms) is used to refer to that noetic, universal dimension of man's being which is fully realized only in the "Perfect Man" *(al-insān al-kāmil)*; cf. the fuller discussion of this contrast in the Introduction, V and VI. This *bashar/insan* distinction corresponds to the opposition Sadra indicates between mankind's first and second "fundamental nature" *(fiṭra)* at nn. 102 and 108 below. Both of these pairs of distinctions were traditional in Sufi anthropology prior to Sadra's time.

mate genus (that is, "animal") and the proximate specific difference ("rationality"), terms taken respectively from the bodily matter and the form of the soul.

But the souls of human beings, after their initial coincidence as to species, will become different in their essences, according to another mode of being and a second fundamental nature.[102] They will become many different species, falling under four main genera. This is because the soul, at the beginning of its generation (with a particular body), is in actuality a form of perfection for sensible matter. But at the same time the soul is spiritual matter[103] with the capacity of receiving and being united with an intellective form, thereby emerging from potency into actuality—or a delusive Satanic form, or that of a brutish or a predatory animal.

It is in these forms that they will be resurrected and rise up at the Awakening,[104] that is, in another mode of being than this (phys-

[102] "Fundamental nature" here translates the important Koranic term *fiṭra* (30:30; etc.), which originally referred to the primordial "Adamic" (cf. nn. 44 and 94) purity of the human soul and its capacity for realizing its innate noetic perfection. In this regard, note the famous Prophetic tradition that "every child is born according to the *fiṭra*, and it is only his parents who make him into a Jew or a Magian or a Christian," as well as other important traditions concerning this *fiṭra* recorded in Wensinck, *Concordance*, V, 179-180. The "second *fiṭra*" mentioned here refers to the unique extent of man's intrinsically creative psychic capacities, both imaginal and intellective or noetic, which comprehend a very different "world" or "modality of being" (*nash'a*) than that of particular material existents. In contrast, the "first" or "generated" *fiṭra* (at n. 108 below) refers to those limited vegetal and animal powers of life which man shares with other animals and corporeal beings.

[103] This conception of soul as "spiritual matter" (*mādda rūḥānīya*) is the basis for Sadra's eschatological interpretations outlined in II-B (theoretically) and II-C (more symbolically) below. For the Neoplatonic analogues, see E. H. Dodds' notes on the concept of the *okhēma* in his edition of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, pp. 313-321. It must be added, however, that in most cases Sadra continues to use terms like "matter," "material," "corporeal," and the like in their commonly accepted meanings, referring to the more familiar aspects of the physical universe. Cf. the important discussions of the fundamental differences between psychic and physical being in II-B, §§1-2, and II-C, §16 below.

[104] Sadra, following the Koran, uses a great many Arabic terms—such as "Awakening" (*al-ba'th*), "Rising" (*al-qiyāma*), "Gathering" (*ḥashr*), and so on —to refer to the psychic and noetic modalities of being; we have attempted to translate each of these terms consistently by a different English equivalent. However, in most cases Sadra uses these expressions more or less interchangeably and ambiguously: sometimes they refer, as in this section, to the distinctive psychic modality of being, and sometimes to the universal noetic dimension.

ical) one—since that (purely physical re-embodiment) would mean the transmigration of the soul and not its resurrection. But the transmigration of souls is impossible, while the corporeal resurrection (in the "spiritual body") is actually happening.

In this world, therefore, man stands between becoming an angel, a devil, a brute, or a predatory beast. If knowledge and reverence predominate in him, he will become an angel. Or if he is given over to hypocrisy, cunning, and compounded ignorance (that is, being unaware of his actual ignorance), then he will be a rebellious devil. If he surrenders to the effects of sensuous appetite, he will become a brute beast; and if overcome by the effects of irascibility and aggressiveness, then he will be a predatory animal. For the dog is a dog because of its animal form, not because of its particular matter; and the pig, too, is a pig because of its form, not its matter. Similarly with all the other animals: some of them fall under the characteristic attributes of the appetitive soul, according to its divisions, such as the mule, donkey, sheep, bear, mouse, cat, peacock, rooster, and so forth; others fall under the characteristic attributes of the irascible soul, such as the lion, wolf, leopard, scorpion, eagle, falcon, and their like.

Thus, according to the habits and states of character which predominate in a man's soul, so will he rise up in a corresponding form on the Day of the Rising. And thus man will become [242] many species in the Hereafter, as the divine Book has expressed it, such as His saying: *On the Day when the enemies of God are raised up for the Fire, they will be divided into groups* (42:19); or *on that Day they will become separated into groups* (30:14). One can also construe the verses in the Koran referring to metamorphoses according to what we have said, such as His saying—May He be exalted!: *There is no creature walking the earth, and none flying with its wings, but that they are peoples like you* (6:38); and other verses, such as His saying: *On that Day their tongues and hands and feet shall testify against them as to what they were doing* (24:24); and

Most often, the intended reference can only be determined from the specific context. It should again be stressed (cf. nn. 53 and 70 above) that most of the Arabic verbs translated in the future tense in this and succeeding sections could equally well be read in the present imperfect tense, and that this latter reading probably corresponds more closely to Sadra's philosophic intentions.

On the question of the transmigration of souls, *tanāsukh*, see §8, n. 93 above.

His saying: *O assembly of jinn! Many are the men* and jinn *you have seduced* (6:128); and His saying: *When the wild beasts are raised up* (81:15).

(The same reality is expressed in) the saying of (the Shiite Imam Ja'far) al-Ṣādiq—Peace be with him!: "Men will be raised up according to the forms of their actions"—or in another version, "according to the forms of their intentions." And in yet another version (he says): "Some men will be resurrected according to a form which befits them, such as ticks or pigs." This is how one may interpret the words of Plato, Pythagoras, and others among the ancients whose language is that of symbolic figures and whose wisdom is taken from the Lamp-niche of Prophecy of the prophets.[105]

Now as for what is mentioned in the books of "official" philosophy[106] to the effect that one thing cannot be the form of something and the matter for something else: this holds true only within a single state of being (that is, physical reality) and for what has absolutely no connection with any corporeal matter (that is, the Forms or "separate intelligences"). But it is one of the properties of the soul, in its state of connection with matter, that it can take on and be united with one form after another. Moreover, the corporeal form, although in actuality a form for corporeal matter, is also potentially an intelligible.

105 For the "Lamp-niche of Prophecy" as equivalent to this universal Intellect or noetic dimension of being, see also nn. 6, 74, and further references below. Plato's eschatological myths were generally known in Islamic philosophy, especially through the writings of Alfarabi. Cf. Alfarabi's *The Philosophy of Plato*, pp. 63-64, where the "resurrection" in bestial or angelic forms is taken as an allegorical expression for the different habitual states of individual souls; the phenomena are basically the same as those Sadra refers to here, although the larger metaphysical framework of understanding is considerably different.

The saying attributed to Ja'far al-Ṣādiq at the beginning of this paragraph has also been considered a Prophetic tradition. Cf. Furūzānfar, p. 19: "Men are only resurrected according to their intentions," and the related text at n. 150 below.

106 For Sadra's distinction—borrowed from Suhrawardi—between the "official wisdom" or "formalist philosophy" (*al-ḥikma al-rasmīya*) characteristic of the kalam theologians and many of the Islamic "Peripatetics," and the "Illuminationist" wisdom (*ḥikmat al-ishrāq*) of the Platonic philosophers and enlightened sages, see n. 53 above and the Introduction, III-C. Here Sadra is referring more particularly to the many handbooks of Avicennan logic and philosophy, presented in a summary doctrinal form, that were a common part of the curriculum of theological studies in his time.

We have given (in the *Asfār*) the proof establishing the transubstantiation of all material natures.[107] And the human soul is the quickest of all generated things so far as its changes and transformations in the physical and psychic and intellective modalities of being. In the initial (stages) of its fundamental generated nature[108] the soul is the conclusion of the world of sensible things and the beginning of the spiritual world. It is the greatest gateway to God, through which one can be brought to the Highest Kingdom; but it also has *a certain portion of all the gates of Hell* (25:44). It is the divider standing between this world and the other world, because it is the form of every potency in this world and the matter for every form in another world.

Thus the soul is *the junction of the two seas* (18:59)[109] of corporeal and spiritual things; its being the last of the corporeal realities is a sign of its being the first of the spiritual ones. If you consider its substance [243] in this world, you will find it the principle of all the bodily powers, employing all the animal and vegetal forms in its service. But if you consider its substance in the world of the Intellect, you will find that at the beginning of its fundamental nature it is pure potential without any form in that world; but it has the capability of moving from potency to actuality with regard to the Intellect and the intelligible. Its initial relation to the form

107 The proof alluded to here is the same one referred to in the discussions of *ḥaraka jawharīya* or the universal "transubstantiation" of being in Part I, §13 (n. 62) above. In this sentence, "material" is evidently used in the most extensive sense (cf. n. 103), including the psychic modality of being as well as the more restricted physical or elemental one (which we ordinarily call "material" reality).

108 *Fiṭra takawwunīya*: the Koranic notion of the *fiṭra*, man's noetic "primordial nature," has already been discussed at n. 102 above. Here Sadra combines it with an adjective referring to things "generated" or "composed" of material elements; the reference is to those aspects or activities of soul which are primarily concerned with the survival of a particular body and its needs—as opposed to that universal noetic dimension of being which composes man's "second *fiṭra*" (n. 102), or truly human nature.

109 This famous Koranic phrase, widely interpreted in Sufi literature, refers to the mysterious locality where Moses met his deathless spiritual guide ("Khiḍr"); cf. n. 2 above on the Sufi interpretation of this passage, which Sadra has largely adopted here. This "locality" of soul is the same as that "isthmus" (*barzakh*: n. 97) between the material and noetic realms of being already mentioned in §9 above; the connection of these two symbols follows from the Koranic mention (55:22) of God's placing a *barzakh* "between the two seas."

of that world (of the Intellect) is that of the seed to its fruit, or of the embryo to the animal: just as the embryo is in actuality an embryo, and an animal only potentially, so (at first) the soul is in actuality a mere mortal man,[110] but potentially (realized) Intellect.

It is to this that His saying—May He be exalted!—alludes: *Say: "I am a mere mortal like you. It is inspired in me that your God is One God!"* (18:110). The resemblance mentioned here between the soul of the Prophet—God's blessing and peace be with him!—and the souls of other mortal men refers to this (initial) state of being in the soul. But when, through divine inspiration, his soul moved from potentiality to actuality, he became the noblest of all creatures and nearer to God than any other prophet or angel, as indicated in his words: "I have a time with God which I do not share with a cherubic angel or with any prophetic messenger."[111]

§11. *Principle (concerning the soul as the key to eschatology)*

Know that souls which have emerged from potentiality to actuality with regard to the Intellect and the intelligible are extremely few in number and rarely to be found among individual human beings. The vast majority of individual souls are imperfect, not having become Intellect in actuality. But this does not entail the annihilation of these souls after death, as Alexander Aphrodisias[112] supposed,

110 *Bashar*: the same word is translated as "mere mortal" in the Koranic verse (18:110) in the next paragraph. Cf. n. 101 on the meaning of this key term, as opposed to *insān* (the "fully human," universal aspect of man's being), in reference to the physical, animal dimension of human existence and the corresponding traits of soul.

111 For the sources of this famous Prophetic tradition and some of its uses in Sufi literature, see Furūzānfar, p. 39.

112 Many of the commentaries of Alexander and (to a lesser extent) the more Neoplatonic ones of Themistius were translated into Arabic along with the actual Aristotelean corpus. They largely determined the prevailing scholastic interpretations of many controversial points in Aristotle among Islamic, Jewish, and Latin Christian philosophers of the medieval period. In particular, the argument between Alexander and Themistius on the nature of the soul and its possible individual "survival" was—along with the related question of the "unity of the intellect"—a classic focus of dispute in Islamic philosophy and theology. And in the West, its repercussions were at the heart of the "Averroist" controversies: Averroes' conception of the soul, closely following that of Alexander (which Sadra criticizes here), was often understood to deny any meaningful individual resurrection and Judgment. However, as indicated in the Introduc-

since his supposition was based on (the supposition) that there are only two worlds (of being), the world of material bodies and the world of intellects.

But it is not like that. Instead, there is another world of being, alive and sensible by essence, unlike this (physical) world—a world that is perceived by these true (inner) senses, not by these transient external ones. That world is divided into a sensible Garden (or "Paradise") containing the felicities of the blessed, including food, drink, marriage, sensual desire, intercourse, and all that could delight the soul and give pleasure to the eyes; and a sensible "Hell" containing the punishments of the wretched, including hellfire, torments, serpents, and scorpions. If this world (of soul) did not exist, what Alexander mentioned would be undeniably true, and that would mean that [244] the sacred Laws and divine Books were lying when they maintained the resurrection for everyone.

The master of philosophers, Abū 'Alī (Avicenna) reported what Alexander had maintained and what could be said in refutation of that view in his treatise *al-Ḥujaj al-'Ashara* ("The Ten Arguments") and elsewhere. But he himself seems to have been inclined towards Alexander's view in another work, in his replies to the questions put to him by Abū al-Ḥasan al-'Āmirī. And in general, what is reported of the leader of the Peripatetics (that is, Aristotle), according to Alexander, is the belief that imperfect, material souls are dissolved after death. (Admittedly), according to Themistius' account, they do have a survival. But this is difficult to maintain according to their (Peripatetic) principles, since it implies that these souls have a survival even though they cannot retain any vice of the soul that might torment them, or any intellective virtue that might give them pleasure—and yet (if they do survive) it is impossible that they be deprived of all ability to act and be acted upon. These people (that is, Themistius and other philosophers who maintained some kind of survival for imperfect souls) said that God's providence is all-encompassing, and that therefore these souls must necessarily have some sort of weak, imaginary happiness, of the sort that comes from apprehending the first principles (of all reasoning), such as the saying that the whole is greater than the part, and

tion, III-E, IV-C, and VI-A, Sadra's primary philosophic intentions in this section do not lie on that level of theological or eschatological conceptions.

similar notions. Therefore (on their view) it is said that "the souls of dead infants are between Paradise and Hell." This was what Avicenna had to say.

But I wonder what happiness there could be in the perception of these elementary notions?! As for those ordinary, honest souls who did not acquire a desire for the theoretical sciences, the (Peripatetic) philosophers do not tell us anything about their afterlife or about the sayings concerning their Return and that of the other souls of their rank, since they do not have the rank of ascent to the world of noetic Sanctity.

One cannot say that such souls return in the bodies of animals, because of the impossibility of reincarnation. Nor can one claim that they totally disappear, because of what we know concerning the impossibility of corruption in things (like souls) that are not disposed to it by nature. Accordingly, one group (of philosophers) was driven to the hypothesis that the souls of the pious and of ascetics become connected (after death) with a body composed of vapor and smoke in the atmosphere, and that this body serves as a substrate for what they imagine, through which they attain a sort of imagined happiness; and the wretched likewise (attain their punishment) this way. Still another group disagreed, rejecting this theory of a vaporous body, and corrected it by placing that substrate instead in the body of the heavens. The author of *Kitāb al-Shifā'* (that is, Avicenna) reported this view on the part of a certain learned man, and described it as not a rash conjecture.[113]

[245] The author (Suhrawardi) of *al-Talwīḥāt* ("The Intimations")[114] agreed with this view about the connection of the soul

113 The passage referred to here is in the concluding part of the metaphysics (*ilāhīyāt*) of the *Shifā'* (Cairo ed.), p. 431, lines 12 ff. Commentators have usually taken this passage as a reference to Alfarabi. The ambivalent and noncommittal language here is typical of Avicenna's hesitant (and probably intentionally ambiguous) formulations concerning such religiously sensitive questions.

114 The passages below are quoted and paraphrased from Suhrawardi's *Talwīḥāt*, p. 90. The belief in a connection between the souls of the blessed and the souls (or intelligences) of the heavenly spheres, which Suhrawardi alludes to here, was common to a number of medieval philosophic traditions (cf. Dante's *Paradisio*), as well as to their classical sources. In fact, that conception, in various symbolic forms, was shared by a number of religious and mythic traditions around the world: cf. G. de Santillana and H. von Dechend, *Hamlet's Mill*, and Sadra's related allusions in II-C, §12 (at n. 261) below. Sadra's apparent depar-

with the body of the spheres in the case of the blessed. "But as for the wretched," he said that they lacked the power to rise up to the world of the heavens because "the heavenly spheres possess [only] luminous souls and noble bodies. Rather," he said, "the powers [of these sinful souls] demand that they have corporeal imaginations [which would be incompatible with the lofty state of the souls of the heavenly spheres]. So it is not impossible that there may exist, beneath the sphere of the moon and above that of [the element] fire, still another unbroken spherical body, a distinctive species that would be . . . a substrate for their imagined hellfires, biting snakes, stinging scorpions, and bitter drink."

But all the sayings of these worthy men are many stages removed from the path of the reality of true inner knowing and the way of Lights of the Koran. We have shown the many intellectual errors that their theories entail in ⟨our book⟩ *al-Shawāhid al-Rubūbīya* ("The Divine Witnesses").[115]

B. Second Illumination, concerning the true reality of the Return and the manner of resurrection of the bodies

Now as for the Return[116] of the ⟨perfect, enlightened⟩ spirits and the establishment of true happiness for *those drawn near to God* (4:172; etc.)[117] and of misery, on the other hand, for the wretched

ture from this astral line of interest is a major difference between his metaphysics and that of his more traditionally Neoplatonic predecessors, such as Suhrawardi: cf. also Part I, nn. 59 and 69, which indicate some of the philosophic grounds for his relative devaluation of the special status of the heavens and their angelic souls and intellects.

115 See the Introduction, IV-A, for the relation of this book, one of Sadra's last and most important works, to the *'Arshīya* and the *Asfār*. The word translated in this last paragraph as "true inner knowing" is *'irfān*; see the discussion of its meaning (and the related term *ma'rifa*) in n. 52 above and the related discussions in the Introduction, V-A and VI-A.

116 *Al-ma'ād*: cf. nn. 9, 71, and the Introduction, IV-B and VI.

117 The "spirits" (*al-arwāḥ*: cf. II-A, §2, n. 76) and "those drawn near to God" (*al-muqarrabūn*) are both originally Koranic expressions that Sadra, following earlier Sufis and philosophers, often applies to those rare enlightened individuals who have fully realized the noetic dimension of man's being. Sadra takes this condition to be equivalent to what the Peripatetic philosophers had traditionally called the "intellect in actuality" (cf. n. 76), although there is considerable question—as he admits in the next sentence (n. 118)—whether this is exactly what those thinkers had originally intended by that term.

who are turned away from God, this is among the things that we have explained in our more detailed books. There is no disagreement between us and the (Peripatetic) philosophers concerning this, although the verification and realization of this matter is beyond what they had attained and recorded.[118] But now we are concerned with explaining the resurrection of the body (which earlier philosophers had often denied or treated allegorically), in the following Principles.

§1. *Principle, concerning the fundamental premises removing the veil from the manner of resurrection of the bodies*

Individual human bodies are resurrected in the Rising,[119] as was stated in the true religious Law and as He—May He be exalted!—said: *What, do you think that We created you only in jest, and that you would not be returned to Us?* (21:117); and His saying: [the unbeliever] *said: "Who shall restore life to these bones when they have decayed?" Say: "He shall give them life Who originated them the first time, and He knows well every creation."* (36:78-79); and His saying: [*And they say: "What, when we are bones and decaying bits, shall we be raised again in a new creation?"*] *Say: "Even if you be stones, or iron, or whatever creation may seem great in your hearts!" Then they will say: "Who will cause us to return?" Say: "He who formed you the first time." Then they will shake their*

[118] "Verification and realization" translate the Arabic *al-taḥqīq*: it is the ultimate "verification" of the metaphysical Truth (*al-ḥaqq*) that is only attainable through direct "realization" in one's innermost being. As indicated in the Introduction (e.g., II, III-B and C, IV-C, V, and VI), most of the original themes in Sadra's philosophy, where he claims to "complete" or correct his Aristotelean predecessors, have to do with principles verifiable only through this sort of direct experience of transcendence.

[119] *Al-qiyāma*: throughout Part II-B, Sadra uses this and other eschatological terms (the "other world," and the like) to refer to what he later calls more specifically the "lesser Rising" (*al-qiyāma al-ṣughrā*), that is, the specific modality of being of the soul and its imaginal perceptions. This is in contrast to the "greater Rising" (*al-qiyāma al-kubrā*), which is the realization of the noetic Unity of all Being—outlined in Part I above—revealed in the experience of transcendence. This more comprehensive perspective, which comes into play more openly in Part II-C below, tends to subsume the apparent opposition of the material and psychic modalities of being ("this world" vs. the "other world") that underlies most of the discussions here in II-B.

heads at you, saying: "When is this?" Say: "Perhaps it is near." (17:49-51).

These fundamental premises are seven:

a. First Fundamental Premise (that the subsistence of things is by virtue of their form, not matter)

The constitution and subsistence of every thing is by virtue of its form, not its matter.[120] Its form is the concrete ground of its quiddity, the completion of its reality, and the source of its ultimate differentia. Thus every thing (subsists) by virtue of its form, not its matter—so that even if one should suppose its form to be separate from its matter, the thing itself would remain despite that separation.

There is only a need for matter at all because of the inability of a particular individual of (certain) forms to be individually instantiated simply by itself, without a connection [246] in being with that (i.e., matter) which can support the necessary concomitants of its individuality, carry the possibility of its occurrence, facilitate by its preparedness its being brought into being, and favor one moment for this event over all other times.[121]

The relation of matter to form is that of privation to perfection. So the thing in its perfect state necessarily occurs in actuality, while in the privative state it is contingent and potential. This is why

120 "Constitution and subsistence" here translate the single Arabic term *taqawwum,* which refers both to the substantiating factors that "constitute" or form a thing (its *muqawwimāt*), and to their continued activity by which the thing maintains its individual identity. "Matter" at this point refers simply to the elemental constituents of physical entities. This sort of form/matter distinction is borrowed from the earlier Aristotelean natural philosophy, and does not fully reflect the perspective appropriate to Sadra's own metaphysics of being: see his qualifying remarks on the "unification of matter and form" at the end of this section. In general, the intended references of these abstract discussions (in §1) will become a great deal clearer if one looks ahead to their particular applications to psychic experience (the "other world") in §§2-5 below.

121 Sadra's main point here, as becomes evident from its application in §2-a below, is simply that while elemental matter may be necessary for the individual "instantiation" (*tafarrud*) of a form in time and space, it is not in itself determinative of the actual "individuation" (*tashakhkhuṣ*: cf. §1-b below) of the particular being. In human beings, above all, the individuation depends on the determinative form, which emerges from a different (that is, psychic) realm of being and actually constitutes the individual living person (*shakhṣ*).

some argued for the unification of matter with the form (in all actual beings). And we hold this to be undoubtedly true, in the way we have shown in *al-Asfār al-Arbaʿa* ("The Four Journeys"), although this question (of the resurrection of bodies) does not depend on it.

b. Second Fundamental Premise (that the individual identity of things is not dependent on their particular matter)

The "individuation" of a thing is an expression for its particular mode of being, whether it be material or separate from matter. As for the so-called "individuating accidents," they are among the signs and necessary concomitants of the individual's being, but they are not among its (essential) constituents. For those accidents can change from one sort or particular to another, while this individual thing still retains its concrete identity and ipseity.[122] This can be seen from the way (a particular individual) Zayd, for example, goes on changing in position, quantity, qualities, and location in time and space—and yet Zayd is still precisely Zayd.

c. Third Fundamental Premise (that the being remains one throughout the stages of its transformation, and that higher levels of being subsume the lower)

Individual being is such that it can change in strength and intensity. And the substantial ipseity (of the individual) is an aspect of that (being) which is continually transformed and intensified in its substantiality through a continuous motion with the property of continuous unity. And that which is one in continuity is also one with respect to its being and its individuation.

As for the Peripatetics' saying that every limit and degree of intensity and weakness (of an attribute of being within a given category) is another species (of that attribute): although this is true, it is only on condition that that limit is existing *in actuality*, and is not one of those (merely conceptual) limits hypothesized during

[122] *Al-huwīya al-ʿaynīya*: the term *huwīya*, originally used to render the Greek *to on* ("being"), was used by Avicenna and later Islamic philosophers to refer more specifically to the being of an *individual* substance, as opposed to its universal "quiddity" (*māhiya*). Here the adjective *ʿaynīya*, referring to the concrete particular reality (*ʿayn*), only stresses those aspects of the being that constitute it as a "particular individual" (*shakhṣ*).

the change in intensity.[123] For these (hypothetical limits) do not exist in actuality, since that would entail the actual occurrence of an infinite number of species (of that attribute) between the two bounds (of a particular change—and such an actual infinity is known to be impossible). Rather, what does exist in actuality is the individual thing between these hypothetical limits in every motion or change, whether that be in substance, quality, or some other (category).

Now what reveals this and protects it from doubt is that being is the original, prior source of existence, and that the quiddity follows from it in the way that a shadow follows from a particular individual. That which is continuously one (through a particular change) [247] has only one being, along with the hypothesized limits (through which it passes). And whenever the being is one, the quiddity is likewise one, not many. But if the being ends up at a certain limit and stops there, then it is specified by the quiddity following from that limit.

In general, the more powerful and the more intense the being becomes, the more perfect it is in essence, the more completely comprehensive of all notions and quiddities, and the more (capable) in its activities and effects. Do you not see how the soul of the animal, because it is more powerful in being than the vegetal souls or the elemental forms (of mineral compounds), is able to perform the activities of plants, minerals, and the elements, and additional activities as well? Or that the soul of man performs all the activities of the animal soul, and moreover has reason?[124] And the Intellect makes the Whole (or "all things") by origination, while the Creator pours forth on the Whole what He wills.[125]

123 This section basically repeats Sadra's analysis of "motion" (or change in general) from Part I, §13 (at n. 60). It summarizes—and depends on—his basic principles of the ontic "priority of being," "relativity of quiddity," and "substantial motion": cf. the discussions of those points in the Introduction, V-B, and the relevant chapters of Part I. In this passage, "limit" conveys only one aspect of the key term *ḥadd*, which also includes the senses of "degree," "boundary," and "definition"—that is, every determining factor that sets off one aspect of being (in any particular category) from all others.

124 "Reason" here stands for "the capacity for rational utterance" *(al-nuṭq)*, referring to the classic Aristotelean definition of man as the "rational animal" *(zōon logikon)*, where speech symbolizes the more universal capacity for an intellective grasp of reality.

125 This last sentence, as Sadra again indicates at §2-f, refers to the universal noetic dimension of man's being that is revealed in the experience of transcend-

d. Fourth Fundamental Premise (that the soul—like God—originates forms of being by pure intention, without material preparedness)

Extended forms and shapes and structures can occur through the activity of a maker, because of the preparedness of certain materials and in association with certain receptive conditions. But those forms may likewise occur by immediate creation,[126] simply through the conceptions and formative directions of the maker, without any association with a (material) receptacle and its location and preparedness. The being of the planets and heavenly spheres is like that, through (God's immediate) conception of their principles and formative directions and through His knowledge—May He be exalted!—of the most perfect order, without any preceding (material) receptivity or deservedness.

Another example of this sort (of creation) is the origination by mere volition of the imaginal forms subsisting in no place, through the imaginal power which is separate from this world, as you have learned. Those forms do not subsist in the body of the brain, nor in the heavenly bodies, as some people have maintained, nor in a world of phantasmal images subsisting apart from the soul. Rather they subsist through the soul and exist in the domain of the soul.[127]

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ence—that is, the "greater Rising" (n. 119) that is only rarely alluded to here in Part II-B (at nn. 117, 119, and 136). This sentence identifies two aspects or levels of the single cosmic process of creation: the Creator's (*al-bārī'*) emanation or "pouring forth" (*fayḍ*) of Being (cf. I, §§12-16) is the more comprehensive aspect, since it includes the primordial Self-manifestation in the Forms of the Intellect (*al-'aql*), a question Sadra had already discussed at length in I, §§5-11 above. The Arabic term *inshā'*, translated as "origination" here and in the following section, implies a sort of immediate creation or establishment without any intermediary or other material preconditions.

126 "Immediate creation" here translates the Arabic *al-ibdā'*, a technical term used by earlier Islamic philosophers to refer to God's timeless, eternal, and unmediated "creation" of the separate intelligences (the "unmoved movers") and the incorruptible heavenly spheres. However, Sadra's extension of this sort of "creativity" (and the related term *inshā'*: cf. n. 125) to the human soul, which is the basis of the entire discussion in §§2-5 below, reflects a very different ontological framework and set of concerns deriving primarily from Suhrawardi, Ibn Arabi, and related Sufi writers. The analogy in this section between God's mode of activity and that of the human soul is developed further in II-C, §4 (n. 190) below, as the key to the ultimate identity of the "greater" and "lesser" Rising, or the soul and Self (cf. the Introduction, VI-A).

127 This paragraph, as Sadra indicates, summarizes the arguments concerning the independent substantiality and autonomy of soul in Part II-A, §§3-11 above.

Although now the being of those forms is weak, they are capable of becoming concrete particulars existing with a being even stronger than the being of material forms. For it is not a condition for the occurrence of something in something else that the first thing be (materially) subsistent and incarnate in the second. The forms of all existing things, for example, occur in His Essence—May He be exalted!—and subsist in Him without being (materially) incarnated in Him.[128] Indeed, their occurrence in their Maker is more intense than their occurrence in their (transient material) receptacle.

One of the "people of realization" (that is, Ibn Arabi)[129] said: "Every man creates with his imagination things which have no being outside the place of his intention. . . . Yet [248] his intention continues to preserve them without this act of preservation at all tiring him; whenever neglect overtakes him, though, that which he created disappears."[130]

e. Fifth Fundamental Premise (that the soul's imaginal power is a substance essentially separate from the body)

The imaginal power in man—by which I mean the imaginal level

[128] The Arabic expression *ḥulūl,* translated here as "incarnate," refers to a gross corporeal conception of subsistence or inherence. The epithet *al-ḥulūlīya,* or "incarnationists," was often used in theological denunciations both of Christianity and of the supposed "pantheism" of such famous Sufis as al-Ḥallāj. Sadra's philosophy—here and in general—is aimed at clarifying the dangerous confusions surrounding those noncorporeal dimensions of reality (both psychic and noetic) indicated in the paradoxes and ecstatic utterances of the Sufis and related figures. See the discussions of this point throughout the Introduction.

[129] "People of realization" here translates the key term *al-muḥaqqiqūn,* those who "verify" the true reality *(al-ḥaqq)* of Being by the direct experience of realization. (Cf. n. 118 above on the related term *taḥqīq,* and discussions of this issue in the Introduction, II, V-A, etc.) It is one of many such terms Sadra uses to refer to the enlightened "knowers" *('urafā')*—in this case, to the famous Sufi Ibn Arabi—without actually revealing their names: that would have been counterproductive and even dangerous, in view of the scandalous and heretical reputation of such authors among some segments of Sadra's intended audience. See the Introduction, IV-C on the general suppression of *explicit* positive references to Ibn Arabi in *The Wisdom of the Throne.*

[130] Sadra quotes here from Ibn Arabi's most influential work, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* ("The Bezels of Wisdom"), pp. 88-89. He silently omits the sentences there describing the powers of the accomplished "knower" to materialize the objects of his intention in the external world, and gives only the words applying to ordinary men. For the crucial role of "imagination" *(wahm)* and spiritual "intention" *(himma)* in Ibn Arabi and Sufism more generally, see especially H. Corbin,

of his soul—is a substance whose being is actually and essentially separate from this sensible body and tangible frame, as has already been mentioned. This power remains despite the decline and failure of this (bodily) frame. The unsoundness and passing away (of the body) do not penetrate to its essence and its perceptions. Yet at death, the pains and sufferings of dying may reach it because of its submersion in this body. After death it may conceive its essence as a man having the shape and dimensions of the form which he had in this world; and its (imaginal) body may be conceived as dead and buried.

f. Sixth Fundamental Premise (that the soul's perceptions are essentially of its own world, only "accidentally" related to physical forms)

In reality, all that man conceives or perceives—whether through intellection or sensation, and whether in this world or in the other world—are not things separate from his essence and different from his ipseity (that is, his individual being and substance). That which he *essentially* perceives is only existing in his essence, not in something else. It has already been indicated that what is essentially seen of the heavens and earth and other things are not the forms existing externally in the material constituents that exist in the dimensions of this world.[131]

Only at the very beginning of the development of sensation in man, when he is only potentially able to sense, is there any need for an association with material things and their spatial relations in order to perceive these (imaginal forms of the soul). Then the perceiving organ may need a certain position and other special conditions in relation to the material of that (object) which is perceived accidentally—that is, the external form corresponding to the one present in the soul which is the thing essentially perceived. Thus, when the perception has occurred in this fashion once or several times, then in many cases the soul may directly witness a form of

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Creative Imagination in the Ṣūfism of Ibn 'Arabī. This part of the *'Arshīya* is itself largely an extended commentary on potentially misleading formulations in Ibn Arabi's writings.

131 The reference is to the discussions of the true nature of the forms of perception in II-A, §§3-9 above.

the thing in its own world, without the intermediary of an external material (object), as happens to the sleeper (in dreams), to those afflicted with certain diseases, and so forth.

Therefore, in the state of (bodily) death there is nothing to prevent the soul from perceiving all that it perceives and senses (in this life), without any association with external material or with any bodily organ separate from the world of the soul and its own reality.

[249] g. Seventh Fundamental Premise (that states of soul can directly affect the body)

The conceptions, habits, and natural dispositions of the soul can directly cause external effects. This happens quite frequently, as in the blushing of an embarrassed person, the pallor of someone who is frightened, the excitement of the sexual organ simply by the mental conception of intercourse, or in nocturnal emissions during sleep. Indeed, severe illness may even result from something imagined, so that a malignant and destructive humor is formed in the body without any external cause. This and similar things have often been experienced.

Among the testimonies to this is the man who becomes infuriated. At the outset, his anger is a quality of the soul, but then the blood spreads out in his vessels so that his face becomes flushed; next, he becomes even darker and flies into a rage, so that his veins stand out and his limbs shake. Then a fire may rise up in his heart that burns up the bodily humors and destroys the moistness of the body, and his sight may even be blinded when the cavity of the brain is filled with the blackness of the vapors arising from it. Sometimes, indeed, the angry person may even die from the extremity of his rage, if the balance of the bodily spirits is destroyed and the animating material is cut off from the healthy blood which generates the vaporous spirit.[132]

Having set forth these fundamental premises, we shall—God willing—state (their consequences for a true understanding of the "other world").

132 For the references to the traditional Galenic physiology that are assumed in this passage, see the sources cited at n. 79 above. Again, it should be evident that the validity of that particular natural theory is not essential for Sadra's basic philosophic point here concerning the influence of states of soul on the body.

§2. *Principle (concerning the true nature of the "other world" of the soul)*

a. That which returns on the Day of the Return is this individual, sensible, tangible man, composed of the contrary (elements and humors) and the blending of parts and organs generated from material constituents. Yet at every instant all the parts, organs, substances, and accidents of that man—even his heart and his brain—are constantly being transformed. This is especially true of his vaporous spirit, which is the natural body closest to his (spiritual) essence and the highest level of his soul in this (material) world, the pedestal of his essence, the *throne on which it stands* (7:54; etc.), and the encampment of his powers and forces.[133] Yet even this part of the body is continuously being changed and transformed, passing away and coming to be.

The decisive point in the body's remaining this particular body (despite the constant transformation of its material constituents) is only the unity of the soul. As long as (the particular individual) Zayd's soul remains *this* soul, his body is also this (same particular) body, since the soul of a thing is the perfection of its reality and ipseity (or "individual substance"). This is why it is said that *this* child is the one who will grow old, or that *this* old man [250] was a child, even though with age he has lost all the (particular material) parts and organs that he had as a child. Indeed, one can rightly say that the old man's finger is the (same) finger that he possessed in childhood, although in itself the childhood finger has disappeared with respect to both its form and its matter, so that nothing remains of it as a particular body: it only remains the finger of *this* man because of the persistence of his soul. Hence this (present body) is precisely the "same" as that (earlier one) in this respect (that is, in relation to the same soul), while in another respect (that is, simply as matter) the two are not at all the same. And both of these aspects are true without any contradiction.

Therefore the individual man who returns after death is precisely

[133] Again, see n. 79 above for references on the physiology of elements, humors, and bodily "spirits" assumed in this and following chapters. In this sentence the Koranic expressions "throne" (*'arsh*) and "pedestal" (*kursī*) are apparently used simply for rhetorical effect, without any obvious larger symbolic significance.

this very same man (who is living now). This is not affected by the fact that this earthly body is passing, corruptible, perishing, and composed of opposing qualities (of the four elements) and of heavy, coarse humors—while the body in the other world, for the people of Paradise, is luminous, eternal, sublime, essentially alive, and never subject to corruption, death, disease, and decrepitude; and the body of the unbeliever (in the other world) may have a molar tooth as big as a mountain, or his form may be that of a dog, a pig, or something else that melts away in *Hellfire which flames up over the hearts* (104:6-7).[134] Then their skins and organs will be exchanged, as He—May He be exalted!—said: *As often as their skins are well-cooked, We shall give them new skins in exchange, so that they may taste the punishment . . .* (4:56). Likewise it is related that "[the damned person] is forced to climb up a steep path in Hell for seventy years. As often as he touches his hand to this [flaming mountain] it will melt, and when he raises it up it will come back; and similarly with his foot: whenever he sets it down it will melt, and when he lifts it up it will reappear."

So it should be known that it is *this* (psychic) body that is resurrected in the Rising, even though it is not this body with respect to its matter. This is according to the first and second fundamental premises (§1-a and b): that is, that a thing is what it is by virtue of its form, not its matter; and that its continued existence in its specific individuality does not rule out the changing of its accidental qualities and even its very matter, insofar as the matter is distinguished by those accidents.

b. None of the things that a man sees and directly witnesses in the other world—whether they be the blessings of Paradise, such as houris, palaces, gardens, trees, and streams, or the opposite sorts of punishment that are in Hell—are outside the essence of the soul

134 According to the commentary by Aḥmad al-Aḥsā'ī, p. 190, the enormous tooth mentioned here is an image of the bedouin Arabs for the vice of cupidity: although the molars are ordinarily worn down with age in this life, their enormous size in the next world would symbolize excessive cupidity in a person marked by that psychic predilection. The other images (the pig for slothfulness and indifference, and so on) are more familiar; cf. the related "bestiary" of other-worldly psychic forms mentioned at II-A, §10 above. For Sadra's understanding of "Hell" (or the "Fire": *al-nār*) as psychic attachment to bodily desires and transient material forms of being, see Part II-C, §§6, 8, and elsewhere below.

and separate from the soul's being. Indeed, in accordance with the fourth fundamental premise (§1-d), these forms in the soul are more strongly substantial, more firmly established, and more permanent in their reality than material forms, which are constantly changing and being regenerated.

c. No one should ask concerning the place and position of these forms, whether they are inside this world or outside it, or whether they are above [251] the confines of the (material) universe, between the layers of the heavens, or within the bounds of the heavenly spheres themselves. For you have learned that these things are another modality of being,[135] having no relation to this (physical) world with respect to place or extension.

As for what is reported in the tradition that "the earth of Paradise is the 'Pedestal' and its roof is the 'Throne' of the Merciful [God]," this does not refer to the spatial expanse belonging to the directions of this world and located between this world and the outermost sphere of the fixed stars. Rather, its intention is what is according to the level of the inner meaning and hidden aspect of these things, since Paradise is within this hidden, unseen aspect of the heavens. Similarly with the report that "Paradise is in the seventh heaven and Hell is within the deepest earth." This also refers to what is behind the veils of this (material) world. Therefore, in accordance with the fifth fundamental premise (§1-e), the realm of the other world is eternal and everlasting; its blessings do not pass away, and its fruits are never finished or forbidden.

d. Everything that man desires and longs for is immediately present there. Indeed the mere conception of a thing is the very same as its presence. And the pleasures and blessings (in that world) only

[135] *Nash'a*: this key term, which Sadra often uses in this technical philosophic sense, originally appears several times in the Koran (29:20; 53:47; 56:62). The Koran always contrasts the "first creation" or "state of being" (*al-nash'a al-ūlā*) with the "next creation" of the "other world" (*al-ākhira*): cf. the Concluding Testament, n. 302 below. Sadra's interpretation here builds on the usage of Ibn Arabi and earlier Sufis who had taken these Koranic expressions as references to fundamental states of being and consciousness; see the explanations in Izutsu, *The Key*, pp. 10-16. It should be noted that Sadra's references to the "other world" are sometimes (as here) to psychic or imaginal being, and sometimes to the comprehensive noetic dimension of reality; this ambiguity is especially important in Part II-C (cf. the Introduction, VI-A).

correspond to the desires (of the blessed). This is according to the sixth fundamental principle (§1-f).

e. The wellspring of all that a man attains and is requited with in the other world—whether it be good or evil, Paradise or Hell—is solely in his own essence, in such things as his intentions, thoughts, beliefs, and traits of character. The causes of these things are not something separate from a man's being and his location, in accordance with the seventh fundamental principle (§1-g).

f. Certain individual men may be so perfect in essence that they become among *the angels drawn near to God* (4:172; etc.), who pay no heed to anything other than Him—not even to the pleasures and different orders of blessings in Paradise.[136] This is in accordance with the third fundamental premise (§1-c).

§3. *Principle, concerning aspects of the difference between the bodies of this world and of the other world in regard to the mode of corporeal being*

These aspects (of the difference in mode of being between "bodies" in this world and the next) are many.

a. Among them is the fact that every body in the other world possesses the spirit (of life), and indeed is living by its very essence; one cannot even conceive of a body there not having life. That is quite different from this world, where there are many bodies that do not possess life and consciousness—[252] and even in those that do have life, their life is something that occurs to them accidentally and is added to them.

b. Another difference is that bodies in this world are receptive to their souls by way of their (material) preparedness, while souls

[136] This is one of the few allusions in II-B (cf. the text at nn. 117 and 125) to the realization of the stage of transcendent noetic Unity with Being, the degree of enlightenment characterizing the "Complete Human Being" and underlying the ontology outlined in Part I. In II-C below (especially §§10-11), Sadra repeatedly points to the radical distinction between this universal noetic "Paradise," encompassing *all* the planes and manifestations of Being, and the pleasurable sensible and psychic phenomena—the "Paradise" being discussed in this chapter—that are in themselves "veils" and obstacles to a true perception of the reality of things. On the more practical side, of course, the importance of this distinction was a common theme in Sufism and many cognate spiritual traditions.

in the other world make their own bodies, by way of immediate affirmation. Here, bodies and materials gradually ascend, according to their states of preparedness and transformations, until they attain to the ranks of souls. But in the other world, the command (of creation and life) descends from souls into bodies.

c. Another aspect is that here potentiality precedes actuality in time, while the actuality is prior to the potentiality in essence. But there, the potentiality is prior to the actuality both in essence and in being.

d. Here actuality is more exalted than potentiality, because it is the end (or final cause) of the potentiality. But there potentiality is more exalted than actuality, since it is the potentiality that actually makes the actuality.

e. Another difference is that the bodies and objects of the other world are infinite, according to the number of conceptions and perceptions of souls. Because the proofs for the finitude of (physical) dimensions do not apply to that world, but only within the confines and dimensions of material things. Nor (despite the unlimited number of "bodies") is there any crowding or interference between things in the other world. And no thing there is in a direction "inside" or "outside" of anything else.

Indeed every human being, whether among the blessed or the damned, has his own complete and independent world, more immense than this world and organized without regard to the course of any other (individual's psychic) world. (For example,) each of the people of blessedness may have all the land and possessions he wants, of whatever extent he wants. This was the meaning Abū Yazīd (al-Basṭāmī, the famous Sufi) was alluding to in his saying that "Even if the Throne and all It contains should enter into one of the corners of Abū Yazīd's heart, he would not even notice It."[137]

[137] Abū Yazīd al-Basṭāmī (d. ca. 261/874) was one of the most influential of the early Sufis, famous for his paradoxical ecstatic utterances (*shaṭaḥāt*), like the one Sadra quotes here, which were contemplated and commented by many subsequent generations of Islamic mystics. Cf. the index of his sayings in Rūzbihān Baqlī, *Sharḥ-i Shaṭḥiyāt*, edited by H. Corbin. In this saying, the divine "Throne" (*al-'arsh*: cf. n. 1 above and the Introduction, V-A) is intended in the cosmological sense, referring to the immaterial realm "beyond" the outermost celestial sphere: hence "what It contains" includes the entire material universe. The "heart" (*qalb*), in the language of the Sufis, is the locus of man's

f. One more difference is that the bodies of the other world and all of its marvels, including the gardens, rivers, chambers, dwellings, palaces, *pure companions* (2:25),[138] houris, and all of the other attendants, servants, slaves, and retinues of the people of Paradise—all of these exist through a single being, which is the being of each man among the people of blessedness. This is because each of them encompasses these things as a *support from God* (2:87; etc.) and *lodging from the Forgiving, the Merciful* (41:32).[139]

The state of the tormented person in Hell, with regard to the flames, chains, shackles, serpents, and other things which happen to him, is not exactly like this. For they are instead encompassed and surrounded by these punishments, as in His saying: [*We have surely prepared for the sinners a Fire;*] *Its tent surrounds them* (18:28), and *Surely Gehenna surrounds the unbelievers* (29:54).

Verily [253] *there is a message in this for a people who worship* (their Lord)*!* (21:106).

§4. *Principle, refuting the doubts of those who deny the Return and reject the resurrection of the body*

These (doubts include the following) objections:

a. The first of these is to search for a location and direction for Paradise and Hell, as though the other world were in some direction or some place in this world. (That supposition) would necessitate either an interpenetration (with bodies in this world) or a

intuitive knowledge of God and His infinite Self-manifestation (*tajalliyāt*); it corresponds roughly to what Sadra understands as the "Intellect" (*'aql*) or universal noetic dimension of man's being. For the ultimate union of the "heart" and divine "Throne," see the discussions in II-C, §11 below (and I, §10 above).

138 The context of this phrase is a Koranic verse that was taken by Ibn Arabi and other Sufis as a classic reference to the continual re-creation or transubstantiation of all things (I, §§12-16), as seen from the standpoint of transcendence: *Give the good news to those who have true faith and do good—that they have Gardens with rivers flowing beneath them; as often as they are given the fruit of those Gardens they say: "This is what we were given before." But it is given to them in resemblance. There they have pure companions, and There they abide forever* (2:25). See the further discussion of these "Gardens" of psychic being in II-C, §§10-11 above.

139 Again, the Koranic context of this allusion is understood: *We* [*angels*] *are your close friends in the life of this world and in the other world. There you have all that your souls desire and all you demand As a lodging. . . .*

vacuum (somewhere in the cosmos), and such a view is completely unfounded, as we have indicated.[140] This is because the other world is a world complete in itself. In any case, the question as to "where" the totality of this world is located is meaningless, since there is nothing above its top and nothing below its bottom. Indeed, the totality (of the universe) has no "top" or "bottom"—so one can only search for the (relative) place of *parts* of a single world, not for the location of its totality. And we have already said that the other world is a complete world.

In fact, both Paradise and Hell are complete and independent worlds. Indeed, every man among the blessed is a complete world, as we have pointed out (at §3-e). How (could this not be)?! For if this world and the other world were not two complete (and different) worlds, then God—May He be exalted!—would not be *Lord of the Worlds* (1:2; etc.).[141]

Moreover, the other world is an enduring modality of being,[142] in which there is no death and nothing ever perishes or passes away.

[140] The particular fallacy of looking for a "place" for psychic being, which is quite literally no-where, was already pointed out in §§2-c and 3-e above; more generally, the unique properties of the autonomous psychic modality of being that distinguish it from physical reality were discussed throughout earlier sections of II-A and II-B. As for the impenetrability of bodies, the impossibility of a vacuum (*al-khalā'*), and the related assertion of a finite physical cosmos, these were fundamental axioms of the Aristotelean natural philosophy that Sadra apparently accepted as true: cf. his related remarks on this subject at §4-g, n. 155 below. It is worth noting that throughout Hellenistic and medieval times the major attacks on the Aristotelean philosophers' conception of the cosmos most often came—as in this instance—from theologians (Christian, Jewish, or Muslim) concerned with defending or allowing for more literal theological beliefs. See the extensive historical references on these problems in H. A. Wolfson, *Crescas' Critique of Aristotle*, Index under "vacuum," "infinite," "body."

[141] Here Sadra uses a play on words—substituting the dual form (*'ālamān*) for the plural (*'ālamīn*) actually used in this common Koranic phrase—to call attention to his literalist opponents' failure to grasp the autonomous reality and distinctive features of the psychic modality of being. However, his focus here (and throughout II-B) on the real distinction of psychic and physical being sets aside temporarily the question of the higher, unifying noetic dimension of reality; that is another meaning of the "other world" (*al-ākhira*) that Sadra returns to more extensively in II-C below.

[142] *Nash'a*: for the Koranic background of this key term, see n. 135 above. A verbal form of the same Arabic root is translated as "to bring forth" in the Koranic verse (56:61) quoted later in this paragraph; cf. also Sadra's account of the soul's similar "origination" (*inshā'*) of its forms of perception in §1-c and d (n. 125) above.

It is an abode of proximity to God, in which man speaks with God and in which *faces are shining, gazing at their Lord* (75:22-23). But this world is perishing and passing away, banished from the region of Holiness. It is reported in a Prophetic tradition that "this world is accursed; accursed and plague-stricken are all things in it. . . ."[143] The difference of consequent attributes (between this world and the next) is a sign of the determinative differences (in their essential modalities of being). God—May He be exalted!—said: *We shall bring you forth again in a state you do not know* (56:61). And (it is reported from the Prophet) by (the famous traditionist) Ibn 'Abbās—May God have mercy on him!—that "there is nothing in this world of what there is in Paradise except for the names."[144]

For the mode of being of the other world is quite other than the mode of being of this world, as you have learned: this world and the other world are different in the very substance of their being. If the other world were of the same substance as this world, then it would not be possible for this world ever to be destroyed and to pass away. And if talk of the "other world" referred to reincarnation (in bodies of this world), then the "Return" would merely be an expression for the reconstruction of (bodies in) this world after its ruin. But the consensus of all religious communities is agreed that this world will pass away and disappear, and that afterwards it will never again be rebuilt.[145]

143 The canonical sources of this tradition are given in Wensinck, *Concordance*, VI, 126. Sadra has abbreviated the actual text of the tradition to accord with his rhetorical purpose here. The full original version continues with the words ". . . except for (*illā*). . . ."

144 For Sadra's understanding of the things of this world as manifestations of the divine "Names" or Platonic Forms, the archetypal intelligible "Realities" (*al-ḥaqā'iq*), see the discussions in I, §§6-11 and II-A, §9.

145 Concerning Sadra's denial of a literalist conception of reincarnation or metempsychosis (*tanāsukh*), see also the discussions in II-A, §§8 and 10 above, and §4-b immediately following. Sadra was well aware of the logical weakness of appeals to the *consensus gentium*. Here, as in Part I, §§13-16, the references to the "passing away," "destruction," and so on of the material world are to be understood in two philosophic senses. The first is as expressions for the metaphysical reality of "transubstantiation," "substantial motion," or the "eternal re-creation" of all manifestations of the divine Being at every instant; cf. the discussions in the Introduction, V-B-2 and 4. The second is with regard to the observable transience of material forms and the constant transformations of the physical elements in sublunar reality, as that was understood by the Aristotelean philosophers and natural scientists.

b. The second of these is to believe that the Return, if it were true, would necessarily entail reincarnation (in earthly bodies). Ordinarily, it is said (by literalist theologians) that this kind of reincarnation is of the sort permitted [254] by the religious Law and is what is called the "Resurrection." But these people have not really considered that the nature of what is impossible by essence is such that it can never become "possible" simply through the permission of the religious lawgiver, or by changing its name! For the impossibility of reincarnation (in the literal sense) is something that has been demonstratively proven.

A certain famous scholar,[146] in a treatise concerning the Return, responded to this difficulty as follows:

> The rational soul has two kinds of connection with this body. The first of these, and the primary one, is its connection with the animating spirit that flows through the arteries.[147] The other, secondary connection resides in the denser organs. Thus, when the balanced mixture of the spirit becomes corrupted, so that it is about to lose its healthy relation with the soul, the soul's secondary relation with the organs becomes more intensified. This gives a sort of individual imprint [of that particular soul] on the parts [of the body]. Later, during the Resurrection, when the framework of the body is assembled and completed for a second time and the vaporous spirit is once more in it, the connection of the soul also comes back just as it was the first time. It is this secondary connection [of the soul to the material parts of the body] that keeps any other soul from arising in this particular mixture of the [bodily] parts. Therefore, what returns is [this individual] enduring soul, because of the tendency of the parts [of the body].

146 The "famous scholar" quoted here is not identified by the commentators, but the conclusion and mode of argument is typical of the famous *mutakallim* Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (cf. Introduction, III-B and C), who adopted the language of the Avicennan philosophers, but used their principles in an apologetic, often absurdly sophistical fashion to defend a literal and unphilosophic understanding of dogmatic theological positions. For Sadra's more general position with regard to this influential form of kalam, see the Introduction, III-B and C.

147 The "spirit" (*rūḥ*: *pneuma*) referred to throughout the following discussion was understood in the Galenic physiology current in Sadra's time as the most subtle material element at the point of interaction between body and soul; see the general references to the underlying physiological theories at n. 79 above.

This is an absolutely foolish and ridiculous reply, and is even more worthless than the first (that is, the claim of successive reincarnations), since it includes all sorts of (additional) mistakes:

i. One of these is that in this matter the "secondary" connection (of the soul to the body) is only an incidental one, in the sense that there is really only one connection. The relation (of the soul) to the (animating) spirits is essential, while the relation to the bodily organs is only a consequence (of this essential relation).

ii. Another mistake is that the connection of the soul with the body is not by intention and free choice, such that the soul could transfer its connection from the (animating) spirit toward the bodily organs when it became aware of the corruption of the balanced mixture of the spirit.

iii. In addition, the man who said this failed to understand that when the body becomes corrupted, its organs do not remain in their proper balance and harmony, such that the soul could somehow hold on to its connection with them. For the central basis of the bond between the soul and the body is by means of the direction of unity and harmonious balance, and this proceeds from the most subtle (that is, the vaporous spirit) through the less refined (parts), until it ends up at the most dense.

Moreover, this man neglected to consider even in the slightest what objective the soul could possibly attain (at the point of death) through its connection with the materials of a corrupted (bodily) mixture and through its natural (bodily) connection. For (it is a philosophic axiom that) no natural activity takes place except because of an essential, natural end.

iv. Another problem (with this man's reply) is that the (bodily) spirits and organs, both simple and compound, all have their origin and continuation (as parts of a living body) in an emanation from the direction of soul, in an order proceeding from the higher to the lower. So if the (higher, ordering) spirit that flows through an organ should be corrupted, [255] then the organ itself would not remain an "organ" (that is, an integral component of a harmonious living whole).

v. Moreover, it is not the bodily organs that individuate the being of the soul.[148] Such (a view would mean) that even when the

[148] This is an application of the first two "fundamental premises" outlined at §1-a and b above, which state that it is the (psychic) form, and not matter,

healthy balance of the body has been destroyed, its composition has fallen apart, and its connection with the soul has been broken off—nonetheless the soul that had escaped from that body because of its corruption would return to it a second time (at the Resurrection) because of the renewed conjunction of its scattered parts in the appropriate shape!

vi. Furthermore (still assuming that the material parts of the body are responsible for the individuation of the person) what would integrate those parts, which have nothing to integrate them but the natural form (of the basic elements) or a power of the soul whose source (on this supposition) lies in its dependent connection to their natural material? And then (what would integrate) the additional parts taken in through nutrition? In fact, the truth of the matter is that what maintains the parts of the (living) individual and integrates the parts (acquired) from nutrition is only the *soul* of the materials in the newborn, according to those levels and stages of the soul that are prior to its becoming a perfect (that is, intellective and fully human) soul. So in general, it is the soul that begins to individuate the body and its parts; the body does not individuate the soul in any of its levels.

How absolutely ridiculous, then, are the words of this man who would make the elementary materials and the crude outer shell of the body—things quite external to the direction of its harmonious unity and balance—into that which naturally succeeds in calling the soul into its connection with the body! This man, and those who resemble him among the notables of every age, are totally heedless of the (true) states, stages, and levels of the soul, of the way in which the body arises from the soul in this world and the other world, and of the difference between these two processes. And he who has truly mastered these premises and has learned the priority of the soul over the body will surely recognize how very far removed this man and those like him are from actually realizing the knowledge of the Return.

Perhaps this man imagined that the body at death was somehow like a deserted old ruin in which a person had lived for a while

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which is the ultimate principle of individuation. Within Sadra's ontology, of course, "form" in this sense is not the abstract quiddity or universal, but the actual concrete individual substance—or "the *being* of the soul," as he expressed it here.

and had then gone off and abandoned for some time. Later, this person happened to return to this old ruin and became so overwhelmed with longing for it, because of his recollection of the preceding times and past pleasures there, that he undertook to seclude himself in that ruin forever, closing himself away from all sorts of civilized, populous lands and splendid, delightful dwelling places! But he who has drunk from the fountain of wisdom and true philosophy will know just how impossible such foolish fantasies and delusions are in (the order of) natural things.

c. A third objection is that the resurrection of the body would necessitate the returning of something that had ceased to exist. But you have already learned that this is not necessary (in the case of the psychic body). The usual reply (to this objection) is that the matter (specific to this body) and its original members remain (until reassembled at the Resurrection). But this is false, since matter (in itself) is absolutely indeterminate, while the essential reality of each thing is its concrete individuation through its form, not its matter, as has been indicated (at §1-a and b above).

d. A fourth objection is that if the returning (of the resurrected body) is not [256] for a purpose, then it is pointless; but that would not befit the All-Wise. Yet if this purpose is (to achieve something) for Himself, that would be a defect (in His axiomatic Perfection and Self-Sufficiency), so He Himself must be considered to be above such a thing. But if the purpose (of the Resurrection) is some good for men, then it must either be for the purpose of giving them pain—which does not befit Him—or of causing them pleasure. However, pleasures, and especially those of the senses, only consist in the removal of pains, as has been shown in the books of the philosophers and physicians.[149] So this (supposition) would require that He must first give man pain (at death), only in order to bring him (through the resurrection of the body) some pleasure of the senses. But does this really befit the All-Wise?! (It would be) like someone who cut off a limb and then applied salves and ointments to the wound in order to feel pleasure.

149 Sadra's use of this classical argument here is primarily rhetorical. In fact, based on his own account of the nature of sensation (I, §10; II-A, §§3-6), and in view of his remarks at the end of this section (n. 152) on the "true pleasures" of the other world, it should be clear that all pleasures and pains are essentially and irreducibly psychic, whether or not their occasion is apparently a "physical" or bodily event.

Now a group of people have responded to this difficulty by saying that God *will not be questioned about what He does* (21:23). No one, they say, has any right to object to what a king does with his possessions. But the true reply (to this problem), in a way that really solves it, is something that has been established in the (philosophical) discussions concerning final causes: namely, that every act and motion has an end that is essential to it, and that every action has its intrinsically necessary reward. Hence (according to the Prophetic tradition): "Men are requited according to their intentions," *as a reward for what they have earned* (9:82).[150]

(This group of dogmatic theologians might object that these philosophical principles apply only to this world, and not to the next.) But the God of this world and the other world is One: *He has no partner* (6:163). And *you will never find any alteration in God's Way* [*nor will you ever find in It any change*] (35:43). His special Activity is nothing but His Mercy, His Providential Ordering (of the intelligible structure of Being), and His Assuring that all things receive their due.[151] And the rewards and punishments are only the results and the fruits of doing good and bad things.

The pleasures and blessings of the other world, though, whether they be sensible or purely intellective, are not like the pleasures of this world, which are false and passing things, *like a mirage in the desert, which the thirsty man thinks to be water* (24:39). Instead, the pleasures of the other world are real ones, which reach to the very substance of the soul, as you have learned.[152]

[150] For the sources and some classic uses of this tradition, see Wensinck, *Concordance*, VII, 55, and Furūzānfar, *Aḥādīth-i Mathnawī*, p. 55. A virtually identical saying was attributed to the Shiite Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq in II-A, §10 (at n. 105) above.

[151] This sentence summarizes Sadra's introductory remarks concerning God's "Activity" (*fi'l*) in I, §12 above, and expresses the fundamental philosophic conviction of God as the principle of all order in the universe—as opposed to the theological irrationalism (the image of God as lawless ruler) proposed in the preceding paragraph. The divine "Mercy" (*al-raḥma*: cf. the references at n. 45), in Ibn Arabi's technical vocabulary, refers to the eternal Self-manifestation of Being (*sarayān al-wujūd*, *nafas al-raḥmān*, and so on) outlined in Part I. God's "Providential Ordering" (*al-'ināya*: cf. n. 54) is a traditional philosophic term for the intelligible formal principles (the "Names" in the divine "Knowledge") grounding the observable structure of law and harmony in the cosmos; this was the subject of I, §§5-11.

[152] The reference is to the account of the true ontological nature of sensation in I, §10 and II-A, §§3-6. As already suggested at n. 149 above, it should be

e. Fifth (still assuming a resurrection of the elemental, earthly body), another objection is that if a particular man should in his entirety become food for another man,[153] then only one of the two could be resurrected. For example, if the eater was an unbeliever and the man eaten was one of the truly faithful, then (the resurrection of only one body) would necessitate either the punishment of the truly faithful man or the eternal bliss of the unbeliever. Or else the eater would be an unbeliever and punished, and the eaten would be a truly faithful man rewarded with bliss, while both of them were in a single body!

The true reply to this (based on the true reality of the soul's "other world") can be known by recollecting what we have set forth above (in §1-3). Some people (like the theologians mentioned in this section) have written the most amazing things concerning this subject. Those (like them) who, although adults, lack the capacity for inner insight and perception through the Lights of true faith, should be forbidden to seek to busy themselves with such things. (For this can only distract them) from simple uncritical acceptance of the giver of the religious Law and contentment with the "religion of old women"—a state that does contain a kind of salvation.[154]

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apparent from Sadra's account that even apparently "bodily" pleasures and pains are essentially psychic (or "other-worldly") in nature—although the realization of this, as an actual experience of transcendence and not the concept or theory, is not so easily accomplished. In this regard, cf. n. 136 above on the noetic "Paradise" as a stage of enlightened perception including *both* Heaven and Hell—a major theme in II-C (§§10-11) below.

153 The problem envisaged here is not cannibalism, but the philosophic point that the basic material elements of human bodies were known to be constantly changing. This continual replacement of the material elements of the body throughout the human life cycle was a commonplace in classical Persian poetry (as, for example, in Khayyām's famous image of the divine Potter molding and breaking the "clay" of the four elements), and is of course assumed in Sadra's vigorous denial of any "this-worldly" (physical) resurrection of the particular elemental body.

154 Here Sadra alludes to a distinction that is of considerable importance in both his metaphysics and his political/religious philosophy (cf. the Introduction, V and VI): it is the contrast between the inner conditions of "true faith" *(al-īmān)*, or accomplished spiritual wisdom and philosophic discernment, and merely formal "submission" *(al-islām)* to or uncritical acceptance *(taqlīd)* of the formulae of action and belief prescribed by a particular community's religious Law *(sharīʿa)* or its *nomoi* more generally. Sadra's particular version of

f. [257] A sixth objection is that the body of the earth is of limited extent, measurable in miles or parsangs, while the number of souls is unlimited. So the earth's body would not suffice to contain an infinite number of (resurrected) bodies. The answer to this objection is what you have already learned from the fundamental premises (in §1-3 above, that is, that the "bodies" of the other world are forms created by the soul in its own modality of being).

(Others have responded to this objection), after granting what was mentioned, (by saying) that prime matter is simply a receptive power, without any extension in its essence, and is therefore capable of an infinite number of divisions and extensions, at least if these occur in (temporal) succession. And (this may be possible, they argued, because) time in the other world is not like time in this world, since there *a single Day is like fifty thousand years* (70:4) according to the days of this world.

But this world is not resurrected in that (grossly corporeal) fashion at all. For the only thing that is actually resurrected is the *form* of this world. *When the earth is stretched out; when it is emptied and what it contains is cast forth; when it pays heed to its Lord, and is rightly disposed* (84:3-5), then it may contain all the bodies. This is as He—May He be exalted!—indicated in His saying: *Say: "Both the ancients and those of later times shall be gathered together to the appointed time of a known Day"* (56:49-50), in response to those who asked: *What, shall we be raised up again, or our forefathers, the ancients?!* (56:47-48).

g. The seventh objection is that it is known from the Book and from Tradition that Paradise and Hell have already been created today. But since they are both corporeal in nature (according to this naive literal view), that would necessitate either the inter-

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this *īmān/islām* (or *epistēmē/doxa*) distinction was drawn partly from earlier Islamic philosophers, but more particularly from Ibn Arabi's writings.

Here the "religion of old women," a traditional expression for naive and uncritical popular belief, is said to contain "'a kind of salvation" because it is at least concerned with the actual affective experience of vivid symbolic images, rather than the pointless—and potentially dangerous—speculations and purely conceptual theories of the *mutakallimūn*. The dangers for both the individual and the community of the sophistical sort of kalam theology Sadra is attacking in these sections had often been pointed out by both earlier Aristotelean philosophers and Sufi writers (cf. Introduction, III-B and C), although the reasons cited by the two groups were not always the same.

penetration of bodies (in the same place) or a denial that the outermost sphere actually bounds the universe.[155] The proper answer to this has already been given (at §2-c, 3-e, and 4-a above), and may be understood from (the fact) that Paradise and Hell are behind the veils of the (material) heavens and earth.

As for those who do not *enter the houses by their doors* (2:189),[156] sometimes they responded to this objection by denying that Paradise and Hell had as yet been created; sometimes (by saying) that the heavens might be torn open enough to contain them (within the physical cosmos); and sometimes by admitting the possibility of the interpenetration of bodies. If only such people had simply acknowledged their incapacity and had contented themselves with the uncritical acceptance (of the scriptural accounts), saying "*We do not know* (72:10); *God* and His messenger *know best* (3:36; etc.)."

§5. *Principle, concerning what survives (in the other world) of the parts of a man, and the (Prophetic) allusion to "the punishment in the grave"*[157]

Know that when the spirit has become separated from the elemental body, there still remains with it something having a weak being; in

[155] Both of these points (the inpenetrability of bodies and the finitude of the physical cosmos) were basic principles of the Aristotelean natural philosophy, which Sadra understood to be demonstratively true. As Sadra indicates here, medieval attacks on those principles came mainly from theologians concerned with their apparent implications for certain literal notions of religious belief; see the historical references in Wolfson, *Crescas' Critique of Aristotle,* index under "vacuum," "infinite," "body."

[156] The figurative meaning of this expression refers simply to those who try to go about something the wrong way, although here (as in the Prologue, n. 4) it is probably also an allusion to those who fail to realize the transcendent wisdom epitomized by the Imam Ali, who was called the "Door" of the City of Knowledge in a famous Prophetic tradition that Sadra quotes at n. 277 below. On the importance of "uncritical acceptance" (*taqlīd*) of scripture by those unable to comprehend its deeper philosophic and spiritual intentions, see Sadra's similar remark at §4-f (n. 154) and the discussions in the Introduction, III-E, IV-C, V-A, and VI-B.

[157] The expression "punishment in the grave" here refers to a particular popular conception of the eschatological events, shared by some Christian traditions as well, according to which the events of the "afterlife" will be divided into two stages: there is a first stage of punishment (or reward) for disembodied souls after the death of each bodily individual; then there will be the comprehensive

the Prophetic tradition, this was called "the root of the tail."[158] People have differed greatly concerning its meaning. Thus, it was said (by some theologians) that it was the original part of the body.[159] And it was said (by certain philosophers) that it was the material intellect [257] or simply prime matter.[160] Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī said that it was only the soul, and that the other world arose out of this.[161] (The theologian) Abū Yazīd al-Waqwāqī said

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Judgment (and reward or punishment) of *all* men, in their resurrected *bodies*, at the "end of time." Here and at various places in II-C below, Sadra occasionally makes concessions to this popular form of literal belief in the "lesser" and "greater" Rising (*al-qiyāma al-ṣughrā/al-kubrā*), as a means of drawing attention to the basic philosophic difference between the being of the soul and the highest, comprehensive stage of the transcendent noetic Unity of Being which is realized by the enlightened "knower."

158 Two slightly differing versions of this tradition are given in Wensinck, *Concordance*, IV, 135. The longer one says: "Every son of Adam will decay and be eaten by the dust, except for 'the root of his tail.' From this he was created and in this he will be recomposed." The interpretations alluded to here (and discussed in the following notes) are outlined in more detail in the *Asfār*, IX, 221; that section is summarized in Rahman, *Philosophy*, pp. 247-265.

159 Certain early *mutakallimūn* maintained that there was an indestructible "essential part" of each individual, sometimes identified with a homunculus supposedly contained in the father's seed, which remained intact after death. This conception bears some resemblance to that mentioned at n. 162 below. The underlying materialism of this notion closely fits the literalist, this-worldly understanding of the resurrection that Sadra attacked in great detail in §4 above.

160 Neither prime matter nor the "material intellect" (that is, the bodily substratum of the soul's potential for intellection) would allow for a resurrection of the *individual* human body, since it was understood by the Aristotelean philosophers that the material intellect disintegrated along with the particular body, while only the "acquired intellect," in its purely universal aspect, had some sort of "survival." This point and its ontological presuppositions are the basis of Sadra's criticism of earlier philosophers' understanding of the soul in II-A, §§9-11 and I, §10. It was also the basis of similar disputes in Latin scholastic thought concerning the "Averroist" doctrine of the "unity of the intellect."

161 Al-Ghazālī's view, according to the little-known (and possibly apocryphal) work that Sadra quotes several times in the *Asfār*, does not appear to differ a great deal (at least in its outward expression) from Sadra's own conception here —which is not surprising, given the common background of Sufi interpretation in both cases. Sadra's primary criticism of al-Ghazālī at this point (like his criticism of Suhrawardi's closely related views) seems to concern what he saw as their failure to emphasize sufficiently the ontological *substantiality* and autonomy of the world of soul and its perceptions, as essentially independent (and prior to) the corporeal mode of being. Cf. the discussions of Sadra's treatment of Suhrawardi in the Introduction, III-B and C.

that it was an "atom" that survived in this world.[162] And the author of *al-Futūḥāt* (*al-Makkīya*, "The Meccan Inspirations": that is, the famous Sufi Ibn Arabi) said that they were the eternal archetypal substances.[163] Each of these has a point.

Demonstrative proof, however, indicates that what remains is the imaginal power (of the soul), which is a substance essentially separate from the body. This imaginal power is the last of this first (physical) modality of being, and the beginning of the other world's modality of being. Thus, when the soul is separated from the body it carries the perceiving form along with itself, so that it can perceive bodily, sensible things and see them immediately with its inner sense. This (creative power) encompasses the various kinds of sensible things and is the original source of *all* the senses, as you have learned.[164]

The soul, then conceives of its individual body in the same form which it had in this world when it died. Because of the closeness of its connection with the body (in this life), it conceives of its essence as still being the same as the man who was buried and who died in this form. Thus it may find that its body has been buried, and it may feel the sufferings that overtake it in the manner of the sensible punishments, according to what has been described in the true religious Law. This is the "punishment in the grave" (mentioned in various religious traditions). And if the soul conceives of its essence in an agreeable form and has free dominion over existing things, then this is the "reward of the grave." This is what is alluded to in the (Prophetic) saying: "The grave is either one of the

162 The author referred to here was apparently another *mutakallim*: a doctrine of material "atoms" (*al-jawhar al-fard*) was part of the physics of the kalam; and man, too, was sometimes also considered a created "atom" in this system. Cf. the apparently related view of the kalam theologians cited at n. 159 above.

163 *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīya* ("The Meccan Inspirations") was the longest and most encyclopedic of Ibn Arabi's voluminous works. Sadra adopted Ibn Arabi's famous expression, *al-a'yān al-thābita* (the "fixed archetypal essences": cf. n. 51 above), but understood them to be the noetic, intelligible principles of Being or "Platonic Forms" (II-A, §9), the "Realities" underlying the determinate manifestations in the imaginal and corporeal realms of being. It is doubtful whether that interpretation fully exhausts the meaning and function of those *a'yān* in Ibn Arabi's thought: cf. the references collected in Izutsu, *The Key*, Index, s.v.

164 The reference is to the discussion of the true ontological nature of sense-experience in II-A, §§3-7. "Modality of being" in this paragraph translates the key term *nash'a*: cf. nn. 135, 142, and further references below.

gardens of Paradise or one of the pits of Hell."[165] Then, when the time arrives for the Resurrection and the Rising, the soul may be mounted on a body that is fitting for Paradise and Its delights, if it is one of the blessed—or on a body that is appropriate for Hell and Its pains, if it is one of the wretched sinners.[166]

Above all, you must not believe that what man sees after his death of the horrors of the grave and the various states of the Resurrection are merely imagined things, without any being in concrete reality, as was claimed by certain Muslims who clung to the coattails of the philosophers.[167] For whoever believes that is an unbeliever in the religious Law and strays far from true wisdom and philosophy. Rather, the things (experienced in) the Rising and the states of the other world are more powerful in their being and more intensely real and actual than these forms existing in (earthly) matter, which are the objects (generated from the elements) by means of motion and earthly time. For the forms of the other world are either "suspended" from their (intelligible) Essences or subsist in the region of the soul, which is the most subtle of all materials.[168]

165 On the popular understanding of this "punishment (and reward) of the grave," see n. 157 above. The Prophetic tradition quoted here is interpreted again at II-C, §10 below. For its canonical sources and later usages, see Wensinck, *Concordance*, II, 319, and Furūzānfar, *Aḥādīth-i Mathnawī*, p. 140.

166 This sentence refers to the popular belief (cf. n. 157 above) according to which the resurrection of the body and the universal Judgment form only the second stage of the afterlife, following a long period of postmortem suffering or pleasure in an indeterminate mode of being; this was sometimes called the *barzakh* or "intermediate world." Sadra's philosophic interpretation of this belief, outlined in II-A and II-B, is applied at length to the symbols of Islamic eschatology in II-C below (cf. Introduction, VI-A).

167 This is apparently still another reference (cf. n. 161 and II-A, §11, n. 114) to what Sadra perceived as a failure by al-Ghazālī and Suhrawardi to emphasize and adequately safeguard the ontological independence of the "world of soul" as a separate realm of being irreducible to material realities or mental abstractions from them. The term translated here as "merely imagined things," *umūr mawhūma*, refers to the Avicennan theory of the imagination (*wahm*)—one of the main objects of Sadra's criticism throughout II-A above—which treated the nonintellective perceptions of the soul basically as abstractions from more primary material entities.

168 This last sentence does not imply two opposing alternatives, but rather two perspectives on the same reality. Phenomenologically, these forms are experienced as "in" the soul of a particular individual, in a state appropriate to "his" psychic world. Ontologically, from the standpoint of their unified noetic Ground, they can also be viewed as "forms suspended" from and manifesting

[259] C. THIRD ILLUMINATION, CONCERNING THE STATES THAT OCCUR IN THE OTHER WORLD[169]

It contains (the following) Principles:

§1. *Principle (showing) that death is right and just*[170]

Know that the occurrence of death is a natural thing. Its source, as we have already indicated, is the movement of the soul from the world of physical nature to an enduring modality of being—in the

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the intelligible structure of their essential archetypes (the "Essences," divine "Names," Platonic "Forms," and the like). On the expression "suspended forms" (*ṣuwar mu'allaqa*), taken over from Suhrawardi, see the explanations at II-A, §5 (n. 89) above. The expression "materials" (*hayūlīyāt*) here refers to the "spiritual matter" or pure extension (*miqdārīya*) appropriate to the forms of the psychic modality of being—not to the corporeal, elemental matter of the physical world. Cf. the similar usage in II-A, §10 (n. 103) and the clarifications in II-C, §16 below.

169 This "Illumination" is a classic illustration of the methods of esoteric writing practiced by medieval Islamic philosophers, Sufis, and certain lines of Shiism, integrating elements of interpretation from all of those traditions: see the explanations in the Introduction, III-E, IV-C, and VI-A. Unfamiliar symbols and allusions—the latter often intentionally obscured—have usually been identified in footnotes.

The underlying framework of interpretation here turns on a recurrent ambiguity in the key eschatological symbols (including the "other world," *al-ākhira*, of the title) between references to first, the universally familiar experience of the soul, the primary subject of Parts II-A and B; and second, the world, including both psychic and physical phenomena, as seen from the "unveiled" and enlightened noetic standpoint of the "true knowers" (*'urafā'*)—that is, the experience of transcendence outlined conceptually in Part I. The primary intention of this Part is to awaken in the properly prepared reader an awareness of the larger dimensions of the task of "realization" that is revealed in the movement from the first of these standpoints to the second. Central to that awareness is reflection on the necessary functions of the literal, popular reading of these symbols. The prophets' use of such language points to that dimension of the "Return" which extends to mankind's being as community—the unifying insight Sadra makes explicit only in the concluding paragraph (at n. 301 below).

170 "Death," here and throughout II-C, refers not to the observable fate of physical bodies, but to the two dimensions of man's spiritual "birth" (cf. §4): the "lesser Rising," which is the autonomous being of the soul as experienced by each person, and the "greater Rising," which is the far rarer direct experience of all determinate being (both psychic and material) as it emerges from its noetic Ground. (The point is not made explicitly here until §4, but was already assumed throughout II-A and II-B). It should be added that Sadra actually did not disagree with the current scientific accounts of the death of the *body*—

soul's turning away from this body, leaving the dust of this bodily form, and coming forth into the abode of the other world.

It is not the case, as the physicians and natural scientists have claimed, that the cause of the occurrence of death is the finitude of the natural powers, the exhaustion of the body's innate heat and an excess of superfluous moistness in it, or some other influence of the heavenly bodies, according to their respective shares of influence in the ascendant at one's birth. The falsity of these views, and of others like them, has been shown in its proper place.

Rather, the cause of death is the soul's self-substantiating power, its increasing intensity of being, and its Return—through that motion which is of its essence—to its Maker, from Whom is its beginning and in Whom is its end, whether it be gladdened and delighted or tormented and dejected.[171]

§2. *Principle, concerning the "Gathering"*

The "Gathering" of created beings is in a variety of ways, according to their activities and intentions. For one group (It is) like the reception of an honored company: *that Day We shall gather the godfearing to the Merciful, as an honored company* (19:85). But for another group (the Gathering is) by way of punishment: *the Day when the enemies of God are gathered up for the Fire, they will be divided into groups* (41:19), because of the different kinds of evil habits and traits among them, which necessitate their different animal forms. So some of them will have the lot intended by His saying—May He be exalted!—*We shall gather him up blind on the Day of the Rising* (20:124). For another group, *when the fetters and chains are on their necks, they will be dragged into the*

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which are summarized in the second paragraph below—in terms of its physiological functions and its place in the cosmic physical order determined by the motions of the heavenly spheres (cf. n. 218 below). His subject here, however, is simply the life of the soul, as realized in the inner "dying" to any identification of the soul/self with any body—the experience of the "death of death" graphically symbolized in §8-j below.

171 This paragraph stresses the intrinsic, natural character of the soul's movement toward realization of its true noetic nature as the locus of divine Self-manifestation (§11 below)—a discovery that is at the same time "death" of the illusion of identity with a body. For other dimensions of this "Return" in Sadra's thought, see the Introduction, VI-A and B.

boiling waters, and then they will be thrust into the Fire (40:71-72); and others, *on that Day, will be dragged into Hell on their faces* (54:48). As for another group: *on that Day the sinners will be raised up with eyes terror-stricken* (20:102); and (there are) those *whose portion in Hell is wailing and sobbing* (11:106). To some [*He said*]: *"To Hell with you! Don't speak to Me!"* (23:108), and as for others, *We have blotted out their eyes* (36:66).

In sum, every individual is gathered up according to the form of his inner being and is carried to the goal of his striving and his activity. This is as He—May He be exalted!—said: *Say: "Everyone acts in his own manner, but your Lord knows better whose way is guided best"* (17:84). And in the Prophetic tradition (it is reported that): "Each man is gathered up with whomever he loves, so that [260] even if one of you should love a stone, he will be gathered up with it."[172] For the repetition of actions necessarily brings habits into being, and the habitual states of character of the soul lead to the changing of the forms and shapes (perceived in the world of the soul). Hence every state of character that becomes predominant in a man in this world is conceived in the other world in an appropriate form.

This is something that has been verified and realized by the "people of certainty,"[173] so that God—May He be exalted!—only created animals' bodies in agreement with the motives and ends of their souls; and He created the bodily organs, such as the heart, brain, liver, spleen, genitals, and all the other organs and limbs, in accordance with the aim of the soul and its essential structure. Likewise He created for each of the animal species instruments correspond-

172 A similar, though not identical, Prophetic tradition is cited in Furūzānfar, *Aḥādīth-i Mathnawī*, pp. 155-156. Sadra quotes the same tradition again in his Concluding Testament (at n. 312).

173 *Ahl al-yaqīn*: this one of several related epithets Sadra uses to refer to the realized "knowers" (and especially Ibn Arabi) within Islamic tradition. Following Sufi usage, he generally understands the term *al-yaqīn*, "certainty," as referring to the unique condition of realized noetic Union with Being that characterizes the knower or "man of true faith" (*al-mu'min*). Contrary to common usage, this does not refer to a subjective mental or psychological state of relation to a mental "object" of belief or assertion (cf. n. 317 below). The words "verified and realized" translate the Arabic *muḥaqqaq*, from the same verbal root as the key term *taḥqīq*: cf. the Introduction, II, and earlier references at nn. 118 and 129.

ing to the attributes of their souls, such as horns for the bull, claws for the lion, hooves for horses, wings for birds, fangs for snakes, and the stinger for the scorpion. And whoever considers closely the varieties of men among the people of every trade and occupation—such as the scribe, poet, astrologer, physician, farmer, and all the rest—will find that the forms of their bodies correspond to the motives of their souls. At first these shapes move from men's souls to their bodies; but then they move from their bodies to their souls (that is, as habitual states), so that in the other world they are represented by their (corresponding imaginal) forms. This is what is alluded to in His saying—May He be exalted!—[(Satan) *said: ". . . I will surely lead them astray and fill them with desire. I will command them,*] *and they will surely cut off their animals' ears . . . and they will change God's creation"* (4:118-119).

One of the "people of heart"[174] said:

> Everyone who looks at his inner being in this world with the light of true inner vision will see it filled up with all sorts of noxious vices—carnal desire, anger, cunning deceptions, envy, arrogant pride, conceited vanity, hypocrisy, and others. It is only that most people have their [inner] sight veiled from the direct witnessing of these things; but when the veil of concealment is uncovered by death, then they will see them with their own eyes. Then they may be imaged forth in sensible forms and shapes corresponding to their inner realities. So one may see with his own eyes that his soul has taken shape in the forms of lions or brute beasts. Or he may be surrounded by scorpions and serpents that are stinging and biting him; or he may be encompassed all around by a fire that is devouring him.

174 *Aṣḥāb al-qulūb*: this is another of the epithets Sadra uses to refer to the accomplished "knowers." The "heart" (*al-qalb*) is a key Sufi expression, referring to the noetic dimension of man's being, the true locus of life and perception: see the discussion of this fundamental point in §11 (at nn. 259 and 264) below, and in the Introduction, V-A and VI-A. The original source of this quotation has not been determined; the commentator al-Aḥsā'ī, *Sharḥ-i 'Arshīya*, p. 220, line 28, says it is one of "the Sufis and the philosophers who are like them." The moralizing ethical interpretation is typical of al-Ghazālī's ethical writings (cf. the Introduction, VI-A, n. 87), and not of Ibn Arabi's more esoteric interpretations that are Sadra's primary focus here in II-C. In any case, the language of "direct vision" (*mushāhada, mu'āyana*) is part of the standard Sufi vocabulary;

These things are only his habitudes and the traits of character present (in his soul)—unless it should be assisted by the divine Mercy and rescued [261] from this torment through true faith and virtuous action.[175]

§3. *Principle, concerning the twofold "Blowing" (of Isrāfīl's Trumpet)*[176]

God—May He be exalted!—said: *And the Trumpet* [*al-ṣūr*] *is blown: then whoever is in the heavens and on earth swoons away, all but those whom God wills. And then It is blown again, and lo, they have risen and are looking on!* (39:68).

Known that (as Ibn Arabi explained), "The 'Blowing' is twofold: that which extinguishes the fire, and that which sets it ablaze." And (the object of this Blowing is) the "Trumpet" (*al-ṣūr*), although some have also read it as the "Forms" (*al-ṣuwar*).[177] For when the

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it refers to the immediacy and nonconceptual nature of the experience in question, and not necessarily to any specifically visual or visionary form of perception.

175 In this sentence, the Koranic expressions "Mercy" (*al-raḥma*), "true faith" (*īmān*), and "virtuous action" (*al-'amal al-ṣāliḥ*) are all used in specific technical senses. "True faith," throughout Sadra's writing, refers to the inner condition of true philosophic enlightenment, the actual realization of noetic transcendence; "virtuous action" is the methods and practices leading to (and flowing from) that state of being (cf. n. 315 below). And in this case, the divine "Mercy" refers to the individual's specific psychic character and potential, his "particular destiny" (*qadar*); for the background of this particular usage in Ibn Arabi and his commentators, see the discussion in Izutsu, *The Key*, pp. 168-175 and Index, s.v. This meaning is quite distinct from God's "Mercy" in the sense of the cosmic Self-manifestation of Being, as explained at n. 45 above and in §11 below.

176 The much longer version of this chapter in the *Asfār* (IX, 244-277), consists almost entirely of openly acknowledged quotations from Ibn Arabi's magnum opus, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīya* ("The Meccan Inspirations"). This is one of several places in II-C (cf. §§7-c, 10, 15) where Sadra does not identify quotations from the popularly suspect writings of Ibn Arabi; in this case, the quotation marks and the parenthetical explanations have been added on the basis of Sadra's version in the *Asfār*. To summarize—following Sadra's brief explanation of this image in §4 (n. 191) below—the image of Isrāfīl's Horn here symbolizes the two complementary aspects of the universal reality of the transubstantiation of all being (I, §§13-16): the eternal procession and reversion of all manifest being from and to its noetic Ground. Cf. the use of Ibn Arabi's related symbol of the "Breath of the Merciful" (*nafas al-raḥmān*) at I, §9 (n. 45) above.

177 Although this sort of serious word play is typical of Ibn Arabi's writing (cf. I, §8, n. 40), in this case the reading of "forms" (*al-ṣuwar*) has an early precedent in the commentaries of Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (21/642-110/728), an ascetic preacher of early Islamic times whose teachings inspired later developments in

Prophet—May God's blessing and peace be with him!—was asked what this (*al-ṣūr*) was, he said: "It is a Horn of Light upon which [the archangel] Isrāfīl blows."[178] Now this Trumpet has been described as (a cone), narrow at one end and wide at the other; and people have differed as to whether it is wide at the top and narrow at the bottom, or vice versa. In fact, both views have some validity.[179]

(Ibn Arabi has explained this twofold "Blowing" as follows):[180] "Now when the forms [of things in the physical world] take shape [in nature], the wick of their preparedness [to be 'resurrected' in the world of the soul] is in a state like the readiness of coal to be set aflame by the fire that is hidden in it. But it [only] comes into the open with the blowing [on it], and [likewise] the forms in the intermediate world [of the soul] are set aflame by the spirits they contain.[181]

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both kalam and Sufism. According to the famous Koranic commentary of Fakhr al-Rāzī, which Sadra quotes at this point in the *Asfār*, al-Baṣrī understood this verse (39:68) as referring to the inspiration of the divine Spirit (*al-ruḥ*: cf. II-A, §2, n. 76) into the "forms" of created being, an interpretation close to Ibn Arabi's view here.

178 For the canonical sources, see Wensinck, *Concordance*, V, 372. The mention in this tradition of Isrāfīl (who is not named in the Koranic verse) may have suggested the interpretations of al-Baṣrī and Ibn Arabī, since Isrāfīl was considered the archangel responsible for the breath of life animating all living things.

179 As usual, Sadra understands the "Light" (*al-nūr*) mentioned in this tradition as equivalent to what he calls the noetic "Reality of Being" (*al-wujūd*). Hence, according to Sabzawārī's commentary on the corresponding passage in the *Asfār* (IX, 274), the image of a cone-shaped "Horn" means that if Being is considered from the perspective of Its "simplicity" (cf. I, §§1 and 2 above), then the culminating point is at the highest plane of noetic Unity, widening out through increasingly determinate manifestations into the multiplicity of the physical and psychic worlds. But if considered from the standpoint of comprehensiveness and all-inclusiveness, then Absolute Being is the widest, since it encompasses all manifestations at all the lower levels of being.

180 As already mentioned (n. 176), this long quotation from the *Futūḥāt* of Ibn Arabi is actually acknowledged only in the corresponding chapter of the *Asfār* (IX, 244-277); the parenthetical additions here are based on Sadra's longer interpretation in that chapter. This passage, with its curious intermixture of poetic imagery and semiphilosophic terminology, is quite typical of Ibn Arabi's difficult and allusive style (cf. the Introduction, III-B and C). As is often the case with his writing, it can only be translated intelligibly in the form of an extensive commentary—a practice that, as in this case, unfortunately tends to restrict the elusive fluidity of Ibn Arabi's own words.

181 "Intermediate world" here translates *barzakh* (cf. above, nn. 97, 109, 166)—at once the domain of psychic being and, in popular belief, the "interworld" or

"Thus, when Isrâfîl [the angel who breathes the Spirit of Life into all beings] blows the first Blowing, it passes over these [external physical forms] and extinguishes them [with regard to their insubstantial material mode of being]. Then the Blowing that follows it, which is the second, passes over these forms which are prepared for their spirits like a lamp ready to be ignited, or rather set ablaze —*And lo, they have risen and are looking on! And the earth shines forth with the Light of its Lord* (39:68-69). Then those forms rise up alive and speaking. Some are saying 'Praise be to God, *Who gave us Life after He killed us, and to Whom is the Resurrection!*' (35:9). But others are saying '[*Woe to us!*] *Who raised us up from our resting place?!*' (26:52). And each one speaks according to his knowledge and state of being."[182]

§4. *Principle, concerning the lesser and greater "Risings" (and their "Hour")*[183]

As for the first Rising, (its time) is known from the saying: "When a man dies, his Rising has begun." And as for the greater Rising, there is *an appointed time* (3:9; etc.) for it with God: *None is*

shadowy realm in which souls exist after the death of their bodies and before the universal Resurrection of all bodies (cf. nn. 157 and 183). It appears that in this passage Ibn Arabi was actually playing with both of those meanings, leaving his words to be understood in one sense by the literal-minded and in another by the initiates. Sadra, in the *Asfār,* stresses the latter, philosophic aspect, referring openly to the universal reality of transubstantiation (*ḥaraka jawharīya*), the "greater Rising" perceived by the "true knowers" already in this life (cf. §§4 and 8 below).

182 These concluding sentences are clearly referring to the fate of individual souls, as they constitute their relative "Hells" and "Heavens" on the psychic plane of being (cf. §10 below), the main subject of Parts II-A and II-B above.

183 The popular background of this title is the literal belief (already mentioned at n. 157 above) in two temporally distinct stages of the afterlife. The "lesser Rising" (*al-qiyāma al-ṣughrā*) was popularly understood as the shadowy, indeterminate existence of souls after the death of their bodies (that is, the "punishment in the grave" discussed in II-B, §5 above) and before the ultimate universal Raising of all creatures, in their original bodies, for the Last Judgment or "greater Rising" (*al-qiyāma al-kubrā*). For Sadra, of course, the two terms symbolize the psychic and noetic planes of being and consciousness (cf. Introduction, VI-A). This chapter contains some of the most explicit references in the *'Arshīya* to the indispensable experiential grounds of that philosophic understanding (at nn. 187, 189, 193).

aware of [Its interpretation] but Him and those who are deeply grounded in knowledge (3:7).[184]

Now everything that is in the greater Rising has something corresponding to it in the lesser Rising. And the key to knowledge of the Day of the Rising and the Return of all creatures is in true inner knowledge of the soul, of its powers and stations and ascensions.[185] For death is like a birth, and the lesser and greater Risings are like (man's) two births: the lesser, which is his movement out of the confines of the mother's womb into the open space of this world; and the greater, which is his movement from the confines of the body and the womb of this world into the open expanse of the other world.[186] [262] *Your creation and your resurrection are only as a single soul!* (31:28).

Therefore, whoever wishes truly to know the inner reality of the greater Rising; of the Return of the Whole unto Him—May He be exalted!—and *the ascent of the angels and the Spirit unto Him in*

[184] Here this Koranic verse is understood as an allusion to the actual revelatory experience of transcendence—a point made explicitly at n. 187 below. But it should also be mentioned that this verse, with its reference to "those deeply grounded in knowledge" (*al-rāsikhūn fī 'ilm*: cf. the same verse at I, §5 above) and of esoteric interpretation (*ta'wīl*: Sadra drops the word here) was understood by Shiites as a classic allusion to the initiatic wisdom of the Imams (cf. §§9-e, 13, and 14 below). For Sadra, of course, the Sufi and esoteric Shiite interpretations actually coincide at this point, since in his understanding the inner "Reality" of the Imams (and prophets) is the common noetic dimension of man's being.

[185] "Ascensions" here translates *ma'ārij*, plural of *mi'rāj*, the term traditionally used to describe the Prophet's archetypal mystical ascent to the divine Presence (cf. n. 262). "True inner knowledge of the soul" (*ma'rifát al-nafs*) was the title of Part II-A (n. 72) above: cf. the Introduction, VI-A and numerous earlier references to the key term *ma'rifa*. The "correspondence" of what is in the two Risings means that the experience of the soul is only the field of manifestation (*maẓhar*) for the primordial noetic "Realities" or Forms: cf. the outline of this situation in I, §§5-11 above and the further explanations in §§10-11 below. The "greater Rising" is simply the enlightening awareness of this actual noetic Ground of the phenomena of the soul and physical existence.

[186] Although the imagery of death and rebirth has been applied to the experience of transcendence in the most diverse spiritual traditions, including Sufism, Sadra's remarks here may allude more specifically to the following Prophetic tradition, as given in Furūzānfar, *Aḥādīth-i Mathnawī*, pp. 95-96: "I can only compare the departure of the man of true faith from this world to the infant's departure from that darkness and submergence [in the womb] into the open space of this world."

a Day whose length is fifty thousand years (70:4); and of the manifestation of the Truly Real (simultaneously) with (Its) complete Unity and the absorption (in It) of the totality of things, including even the angels and the heavenly spheres, as He—May He be exalted!—said, *Then whoever is in the heavens and on earth swoons away, except for those whom God wills* (39:68), those for whom the greater Rising has already occurred:[187] (whoever, then, would truly know the inner reality of these things) should consider attentively those fundamental premises that we have set forth in detail in our books and treatises, especially in the "Treatise on the Origination (of the World)."[188] For whoever is able truly to know the way the world and all of its parts (continually) originates in time after it was not—without this in any way contravening any rational principles or defiling the remoteness of God and His true Attributes from any defect of variability or multiplicity—that person will be able truly to know the destruction, passing away, and vanishing of the whole world and everything in it, and their Return to Him.

As for the person who denies this, that is because he has not arrived at this station (of the actual realization of transcendence) and has not tasted this drink either through the direct experience of immediate vision or by means of proof; or because he is blinded by his defective intellect, or due to the weakness of his faith in what the prophets reported. But he whose heart has been illumined by

[187] The preceding clauses describe aspects of the paradox of the simultaneous Unity and multiplicity of Being that was outlined in Part I above (cf. the Introduction, V-B). This passage is one of the most explicit admissions in this book that the ultimate basis of those discussions (whether phrased in philosophic or theological language) lies in the awareness of the reality of transcendence revealed in the experience of the "true knower" (the *'ārif*). Sadra's use of the verbal root *'-r-f*, "true inner knowing" (cf. §13, on *al-A'rāf*), throughout this chapter refers specifically to this enlightened awareness of the noetic dimension of Being.

[188] The reference here is to Sadra's *Risāla fī al-Ḥudūth*, already mentioned in I, §13 (at n. 62 above). Like most of Sadra's treatises, it is largely taken from the *Asfār*, in this case from the sections (III, 59-182 and V, 194-248) on the universal transubstantiation of being (*ḥaraka jawharīya*). The final sentence of this paragraph summarizes that unique perception of the "constantly renewed creation" of all beings, which was the subject of I, §§13-16 above. As in those chapters, the language of "destruction," "passing away," and so on here refers specifically to that experience of the Self or Ground from which all determinate being (both psychic and material) is forever emerging.

the Light of certainty sees directly and immediately the transformation of the parts of the world and its individuals, natures, forms, and souls at every instant, as its particular forms and individual manifestations dissolve and pass away.[189]

And whoever has directly witnessed the "Gathering" of all the human powers, despite their dissimilarities in being and their different locations in the body, into a single simple spiritual essence, to the point that they entirely vanish and dissolve, returning to and being absorbed in that essence (of the soul)—and then (has seen them) arising from that essence another time in the (lesser) Rising, in a form capable of permanence and abiding survival: that person will find it easy to affirm (the greater Rising, which is) the Return of the Whole to *the One, the Almighty* (12:39; etc.), and then Its originating and proceeding forth from Him another time in the abiding (noetic) modality of being.[190]

Know, too, that although the "Blowing" (which symbolizes this eternally renewed creation) is "One" with a kind of unity, in regard to the Truly Real, because He encompasses the entirety of what is other than Him—nevertheless It is manifold in relation to the created things, according to their multiplicity in number, species, and other respects.[191]

[189] Many of the key terms in this paragraph—"station" (*maqām*), "direct experience" or "tasting" (*dhawq*), "heart" (*qalb*), "immediate vision" (*'iyān*)—are taken from the technical vocabulary of Sufism, indicating the particular experience of transcendence that underlies the discussions in this chapter. Similarly, the imagery of "Light" (*al-nūr*) and "enlightenment," which Sadra took over both from the Koran (in Sufi interpretations: cf. n. 6) and the "Illuminationist" philosophy of Suhrawardi, is consistently used to refer to this reality throughout his writings.

[190] Sadra's argument in this paragraph parallels the analogy established in II-B, §1-c and d, between the soul's "immediate origination" (*inshā'* or *ibdā'*) of its imaginal world—the primary subject of Parts II-A and B, and something readily accessible in everyone's experience—and that ever-renewed creation of the manifest universe, both psychic and material, which is the "greater Rising" perceived by the "true knowers." The argument here is aimed only at obtaining the sceptic's formal "affirmation" or logical "assent" (*taṣdīq*) to at least the possibility of this reality, where the decisive experiential realization is lacking.

[191] This sentence is a brief allusion to the transcendent "Unity" of Being which is the subject, from various standpoints, of all of Part I (cf. the Introduction, V-B). The "Blowing" (*al-nafkha*) mentioned in the Koran was discussed at length in §3 (nn. 176-182) above. Here it is more obviously intended as the equivalent of Ibn Arabi's famous image of the transubstantiation of Being as

Likewise, the (multiplicity of) times and moments are, in relation to Him, a single "Hour" (6:31; etc.), in another sense of Unity. And (the word) "Hour" (*al-sā'a*) has also been derived [263] from "striving" (*al-sa'y*), since all generated, natural things are striving for It and directed toward It, beginning with the animal and then the human (powers of the soul).[192]

But the true verification and realization of this goal must be sought from those to whom these things have been directly unveiled, through extensive consultation and continued personal association with them.[193]

§5. *Principle, concerning the "Earth" of the Resurrection*[194]

The Earth of the Resurrection is this earth that is in this world—except that *It is transmuted into something other than the earth,* since Its surface is spread out and extended *so that you will see in*

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the "Breath of the Merciful," where the symbol of breathing directly conveys the twofold aspect of simultaneous "creation" and "annihilation" (*fanā'*) inherent in this aspect of the divine "Activity" (I, §§12-16).

[192] This paragraph condenses an entire chapter (IX, 273-274) of the *Asfār*. In the Koran, the sceptical opponents of the Prophet are shown frequently demanding the exact "time" of this Hour, as though it pertained to the serial time of the material world; Sadra quotes one such passage (7:187) at the end of Part I (n. 70) above. In the corresponding chapter of the *Asfār,* Sadra openly contrasts the true knowers' direct awareness of this "Hour" as the Now with the doubts and perplexity of those "veiled" from this reality by their self-imposed confinement to the time (*al-zamān*) of events in the physical world. The fanciful etymological discussion here (possibly based on the occurrence of both "Hour" and "striving" in the Koran, 20:15), is quoted from an unnamed source in this chapter of the *Asfār.*

[193] "Verification and realization" translate the key term *taḥqīq*: cf. the Introduction, II, and the text at nn. 118, 129, 173. This passage is one of the most unambiguous indications in this book of the necessity for pursuing the methods of inner purification (historically associated with Sufism in the Islamic context) in order to acquire the experiential premises of these discussions; the Concluding Testament contains similar allusions. "Personal association" (*ṣuḥba*) is a technical Sufi term for the continuing spiritual relation of the master and disciples; "unveiling" (*kashf*) is likewise a common Sufi expression that Sadra uses throughout this and other works.

[194] This chapter continues the description of the world as seen from the enlightened perspective of the true knower (n. 195). The "Resurrection" (*al-maḥshar*) here is the same as the "greater Rising" of the preceding chapter, and the "Earth" here is the Intellect (*al-'aql*) or inner noetic Reality of Being—a point that is made more explicitly at §11 below.

It no curve or crookedness (20:107). On that Earth are assembled all the created beings, from the beginning to the end of this world, because on that Day the Earth will be unfolded to such an extent as to contain all those creatures.

Yet the true meaning and reality of this "unfolding" is revealed to none but those who possess luminous inner vision, whose essences have been freed from the chains of physical nature and the bonds of time and space.[195] For they (alone) truly know that the totality of times and their corollaries are as a single instant; and that everything in this earth, all of its spaces and what goes along with them, are like a single point.

For all of the (physical and imaginal) "earths" are a single Earth, since there is another, immaculate, radiant Form of the Earth. In It are all the creatures, and the prophets, witnesses, books, scales, separation, and judgment by the Truth, as (is indicated) in His saying —May He be exalted!—*And the Earth shines forth with the Light of Its Lord; and the Book is set up, and the prophets and witnesses are brought forward; and judgment is made among them by the Truth, and they are not wronged* (39:69).[196]

§6. *Principle (showing) that the "Path" is real*[197]

It is reported in a tradition of Abū 'Abdallāh (the Shiite Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq)—May peace be with him!—as related by Mufaḍḍal

[195] "Luminous inner vision" translates *al-baṣā'ir* (singular: *al-baṣīra*) *al-nūrāniya*: see Sadra's many other references to this "true inner vision" and the corresponding imagery of Light. Here the reference is again to the decisive experience of transcendence and the concomitant vision of the "transubstantiation" of all beings, as described in the preceding chapter (and in I, §§13-16). In the chapter of the *Asfār* (IX, 282-283) that is the counterpart of this one, Sadra states explicitly what is only implied here: that this "Resurrection" is experienced directly by the enlightened "knower" (*al-'ārif*) already in this world.

[196] The Koranic symbols mentioned in this verse are discussed in considerable detail in §§7-9 below. For the "Form of the Earth" mentioned here as the noetic plane of Being, the universal "Paradise," the reality of the divine Name "God" and the divine "Mercy," and the Form of Man (*al-insān*), see Sadra's explanations in §11 below.

[197] The "Path" (*al-ṣirāṭ*) mentioned in the opening sura of the Koran (1:6) and several other verses appears to have a purely ethical meaning in those places. However, from earliest Islamic times it was traditionally connected with a variety

ibn 'Amr that he said: "The 'Path' is the Way to true inner knowledge of God the Exalted. And there are two Paths, one in this world and one in the other world. As for the Path that is in this world, it is the Imam who must be obeyed: whoever truly knows him in this world and strictly follows his guidance will also pass over that Path which is a bridge across Gehenna in the other world. But as for the man who fails truly to know the Imam in this world, his feet will slip off the Path in the other world and he will plunge into the Fire of Gehenna." And al-Ḥalabī has related another saying of Abū 'Abdallāh (the Imam Ja'far): "The *Straight Path* (1:6) is the Commander of the Faithful" (that is, Ali, the first Shiite Imam). Likewise (the Imam Ja'far) is reported to have said, concerning God's saying—May He be exalted!—*Guide us on the Straight Path* (1:6), that "It [264] is the Commander of the Faithful and true inner knowledge of him." Another of the Imams, in another account, is reported to have said: "The *Straight Path* is two Paths, one in this world and one in the other world. As for the *Straight Path* that is in this world, it is the one that falls short of excess, rises above deficiency, and follows what is right, not deviating toward anything false. The other Way is the Way of the truly faithful toward Paradise; It is straight, for they do not turn from Paradise toward Hell or anything else other than Paradise. And (it is reported) from the Imams—May peace be with them!—(that they said): "*We* are the Gateways to God, and *we* are the *Straight Path*."[198] All of these

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of eschatological beliefs concerning an extremely narrow "bridge" over the fires of Hell that the deceased person must cross in order to enter Paradise. That image of a bridge is assumed in several of the sayings cited here. The relatively greater emphasis in this chapter on the Imams and Shiite tradition (cf. also §14, n. 274 below), in comparison to the corresponding chapters of the *Asfār* and other works, can be understood in light of the specific intentions and audiences of this work, as indicated in Sadra's own remarks in the Prologue, and in the discussions in the Introduction, III-A and D, IV-C, and VI-B.

198 All of these sayings of the Shiite Imams express Sadra's understanding of them as types of the enlightened or fully realized human being, the "Complete" or "Perfect Man" (*al-insān al-kāmil*). Since the noetic dimension of being that they have realized is intrinsically universal (I, §§1-4), "true inner knowledge" (*ma'rifa*) of the spiritual reality manifested in one of them is knowledge of all: cf. the explanations in the Introduction, V and VI. For the historical background of this esoteric Shiite understanding of the Imams, which goes back to earliest Islamic times, see the work on Ja'far al-Ṣādiq cited at n. 96 above. The epithet of "Gateways" or "Doors" (*abwāb*) to God, as applied to the Shiite Imams, alludes

traditions related to us from our Masters agree in their essential inner meaning, although their full explanation would require a much more extensive account. Whoever wishes to learn more about this should refer to our commentary on the opening chapter of the Koran.[199]

A brief allusion to that explanation: the human soul has certain psychic transformations in its passage from the beginning of its origination to the end of its life in this world; as a result, it has certain changes in its substance, in its essential modality of being. So every soul is in some respect a "Path" to the other world; just as, in another respect, it is what is traveling the Path: both that which moves and the route traversed are a single thing in essence, differing only according to point of view.

Hence (men's) souls are Paths to the Hereafter: some of them are straight and direct, some wandering, and some running in the wrong direction. Among the straight ones, there are some that arrive (at the Goal) and others that stop short or become inactive; and of those that arrive, there are some that do so speedily, and others more slowly. The most perfect of the "Straight Paths" is the soul of the Commander of the Faithful (the Imam Ali)—May peace be with him!—and next the souls of his blessed descendants (the other Imams). This (perfection) is with respect to both the contemplative and the practical powers (of the soul), and they were what was alluded to in the tradition (quoted above) concerning the Path of this world and the Path of the other world.[200]

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to the famous *ḥadīth* naming Ali as the "Door" to the City of the Prophet's Knowledge, which Sadra quotes in §14 (n. 277) and alludes to in a number of other places (e.g., the Prologue, n. 4).

199 The commentary in question is located in Sadra's *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, pp. 92-206. Its contents correspond to the long chapter on the "Path" in the *Asfār*, with the addition of a lengthy introduction to Sadra's conception of the universal transubstantiation of being (*ḥaraka jawharīya*) and the "other world" understood as the psychic and noetic modalities of being—that is, the same philosophic framework outlined in the preceding Parts of the *'Arshīya* and summarized in the following paragraph here.

200 It should be stressed that Sadra is here concerned with the "practical" (*'amalī*) aspect of the soul's activity *only* insofar as it serves to bring about man's noetic, contemplative perfection, which has to do with a unique inner awareness and state of being that cannot be judged simply on the basis of outward behavior. As can be seen from the following discussion, these two sides of the soul are here understood as aspects of the same reality and do not corre-

The "Path of this world" is an expression for the attainment of psychic harmony and a habitual state of moderation, between excess and deficiency, in the practical intellect's use of the (soul's) appetitive, irascible, and estimative powers. (This is) so that one will be neither profligate nor sluggish and indifferent, but continent and modest; neither rash and precipitate nor cowardly, but courageous; and neither overly sly nor foolishly simple, but prudent and wise. Thus, through the conjunction of these intermediate states, one may attain a situation of compliance and ready obedience by these powers, in which the spirit (that is, the contemplative intellect) has mastery over them.

Now moderation between the violent extremes (of these powers) is tantamount to their very absence [265] from the soul. In this way the soul may become as though it had no trace of those psychic attributes deriving from connection (with the body) and no station in this world: *O people of Yathrib* [that is, the true followers of the Prophet], *you have no station!* (33:13). Then the soul becomes like a polished mirror prepared to receive the Self-manifestation of the form of the Truly Real.[201] And that can only be attained by following the religious Law and submitting to the Imam who must be

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spond strictly to the earlier Aristotelean philosophers' common distinction between "intellective" or "theoretical" and "practical" or "ethical" virtues. The context of Sadra's discussion here is considerably different from the focus underlying those other distinctions.

201 "Self-manifestation" here translates the verb *tajallā*, one of the most basic expressions in Ibn Arabi (and related Sufi writers) for the reality of universal theophany described as "transubstantiation" (*ḥaraka jawharīya*) in Sadra's ontological language: cf. the discussions in the Introduction, V-B-4 and VI-A, and, for Ibn Arabi's use of this expression, Izutsu, *The Key*, Index, s.v.

In this image of the soul as a mirror, which is of course common to many spiritual traditions, what is crucial is the nature of the "polishing." In reality, according to Sadra's understanding, all experience actually *is* divine Self-manifestation. But what essentially distinguishes the experience of the "true knower" (that is, what is unveiled in the "greater Rising") is a transformed awareness of the true nature of that experience—not any change in the "objects" or particular forms of reality. As for the methods of "polishing" in question, Sadra alludes many times (e.g., at n. 193 above) to the techniques and disciplines associated, in the Islamic context, with the practices of the Sufis. The description here of this process of progressive nonattachment in ethical terms is—perhaps intentionally—ambiguous, since the reality in question has to do with the deepest motivations of psychic "action," a condition that cannot be simply described or measured in terms of external behavior.

obeyed—for this is what is meant by the "Path in this world" being the Imam.[202]

The "Path of the other world" is an expression for the passage of the soul, by means of its contemplative power and its practical intellect,[203] across the ranks of existent things and the sensible, psychic, and intellective modalities of being, and its departure from the concealment of the veils and dark coverings (of material existence) into the open expanses of the divine Lights.

The *Straight Path*, then, has two aspects: one of them (the practical) is sharper than a sword, so that whoever stops on it is cut in two; and the other (the contemplative) is finer than a hair. Stopping along the first Path necessitates a cutting and sundering (of the soul from its true nature), as in His saying: *You are heavily weighed down to earth: Do you find the life of this world more pleasant than the other world?!* (9:38). Or as it says in the tradition: "The man of true faith passes along the Path like a fleeting flash of lightning." And turning away from the second Path necessarily causes perdition and punishment: *Surely those who do not have true faith in the other world have swerved from the Path* (23:74).

Insight Revealed to Inner Vision[204]

Know that the *Straight Path* that will bring you to Paradise if

[202] The ambiguity of this sentence (and of similar expressions in the Concluding Testament) points to the critical political dimension of Sadra's understanding of the Imamate and the religious Law: cf. the Introduction, III-A and F, and VI-B. Outwardly, this sentence could be taken as arguing for unquestioning obedience (*taqlīd*) to the commands of the legal and religious scholars, but that leaves aside the critical question of their relation to the reality and authority of the "Imam." In any case, it is fairly evident that that sort of outward behavior would not ordinarily be sufficient for reaching the stage of realization Sadra had just described—not to mention that the last living Imam (according to official Twelver Shiite theology) had been in "concealment" for several centuries. Reflection on what is implied by the "intentions" of the "true" religious Law (cf. Concluding Testament, n. 303) and by "knowing" the true "Imam" referred to here places the thoughtful reader in a more complex and challenging position vis-à-vis the popular conception of the meaning of those terms.

[203] This is an allusion to the essential and integral role of the "practical" aspect of the soul (n. 200), the side voluntarily ordering man's bodily or animal nature, in bringing about the actual realization of his fully human noetic perfection. For the implicit political dimension of this activity, see §16, n. 301 below.

[204] *Baṣīrā kashfīya*: although both of these terms belong to the traditional Sufi

you travel It is in itself the very form of the right guidance of the soul, extending from the beginning of sensible nature to the Gate of Riḍwān (the legendary gatekeeper of Paradise). In this abode (of physical being), the Path is like all the other unseen realities that are hidden from (external) vision and cannot be observed in a particular form. But when *the veil* of physical nature *is torn away* (50:22) by death, there will be revealed to you on the Day of the Rising a bridge, sensible and extended over the surface of Gehenna, with its beginning at the point of departure and its end at the Gate of Paradise. Everyone who observes it will know that it is your handiwork and that you built it.

And they will know that in this world it was a bridge stretched out over the surface of that *Gehenna* (of physical being) to which *it is said: "Are you still not filled?!" And it replies: "Are there any more?"* (50:30), so that it can be increased by the length and depth and breadth of your own physical nature. For your physical nature (with its three spatial dimensions) is a *three-branched shadow* of your Reality, *a shadow which gives no shade and does not protect* the substance of your essential self *against the flames* (77:30-31) of the Gehenna (of corporeal being). Rather, this (physical nature) is what leads your soul into *the flames of* those carnal desires whose *Hellfire* is hidden (to physical vision), although on the Day of the Rising it is clearly appearing, according to His saying: *And Hellfire will clearly appear [to the sinners]* (26:91) who [266] will see It.[205]

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vocabulary, in this case there is nothing especially difficult about the subject matter, which is the distinction—and at the same time, the inner relation—between the ontological and psychic meanings of "Hell" (explained in n. 205 below).

205 This is Sadra's first tentative approach to distinguishing the "ontological" and "psychic"—or one might say, the enlightened and unenlightened—meanings of "Paradise" and "Hell," distinctions which are the primary subject of Sections §§8-12 below. The following summary should help to clarify what Sadra intentionally keeps half-hidden at this point:

On the psychic plane, our experience ordinarily moves back and forth between what we view as "paradisaic" or "hellish" conditions, depending on the predispositions of our character and the accidental features of our bodily, historical existence. At this everyday level of experience, "Paradise" (*al-janna*: also "the Garden") and "Hell" (*al-nār*: also "fire") are relative and *parallel* expressions.

From an ontological perspective, in the knower's direct realization of the noetic Reality of Being (that is, the "greater Rising"), "Paradise" is precisely the universal, always present noetic Context of experience—a level of awareness

(This will surely happen) unless It is extinguished by the water of repentance which purifies the soul of its transgressions, and by the water of knowledge which purifies hearts from the *first state of ignorance* (33:33) and from the second.[206]

§7. *Principle, concerning the opening of the Books and the Pages*

He—May He be exalted!—said: *And We bring forth for him on the Day of the Rising a Book that he finds opened wide. "Read your Book! Today your soul is sufficient as a reckoning against you"* (17:13-14). And He—May He be exalted!—said: *And when the Pages are opened wide* (81:10).

Know that everything a man does with his soul or perceives with his senses leaves a certain trace in his essence. These influences of his (psychic) movements and activities are gathered together in the "Page" of his soul and the treasury of his perceptions. And he is a "Book" which today is closed up and hidden from the scrutiny of

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that plainly encompasses *both* painful and pleasant (in fact, all) psychic phenomena. And "Hell," correspondingly, is the insubstantial, ever-changing condition of physical existence (that is, "this world," *al-dunyā*). Sadra very frequently uses the term "Gehenna" (*jahannam*) to refer specifically to this meaning of "Hell" as the modality of physical existence.

The inner connection between these two different meanings of "Hell," as Sadra indicates here, lies in the soul's illusory identification of its true reality or being (the "self") with a particular material entity, the accidents occurring to that body, and the fears, desires, and valuations that naturally arise in connection with its physical existence. This is what Sadra commonly calls the inner condition of psychic attachment or "connection" (*ta'alluq*) with a particular body.

206 As Sadra has already indicated (nn. 200-203), the "purification" of the soul and the unique "knowing" that reveals the noetic Paradise are actually two aspects of a single process. The "state of ignorance" (*al-jāhiliya*) mentioned in the Koran was popularly understood to refer to the condition of the pagan inhabitants of pre-Islamic Arabia. Here, the "first state of ignorance" is understood as an allusion to man's state of potential for realizing his noetic perfection as he enters this world (that is, as the *fiṭra*, or Adamic "primordial nature" at n. 102 above). The "second state of ignorance," then, refers to the inner condition of "compounded ignorance" (*jahl murakkab*: cf. II-A, §10) or unexamined beliefs and prejudices and conventional "knowledge" that is our actual state of being most of the time. More particularly, Sadra saw it as the condition of those "devils" among the religious scholars and Shiite clerics of his time whom he bitterly attacks in the Prologue and Concluding Testament (for example, at nn. 8, 316, 317).

(physical) vision. But with death, there will be revealed to him what was hidden from his vision in the condition of (bodily) life, recorded in the Book which *none shall disclose at its proper time but He* (7:187). We have already intimated that the deep-rooted impressions of (the soul's) inner condition and the firm establishment of the psychic attributes—what the philosophers call the "habitual state of character" (*al-malaka*) and the people of the religious Law call the "angel" (*al-malak*) or "devil"—are what necessitates the abiding of (the soul's) reward and punishment.

So everyone *who has done even an atom's weight of good or evil will see* (99:7-8) its trace written on the Page of his essence or on a Page higher than that: this is simply another expression for the opening of the Pages and the unfolding of the Books. Thus, whenever the time comes that a man's (inner) vision is turned toward the countenance of his essential self, when *the veil is removed* (50:22) and *the dark covering* [*over their vision*] (2:7) is lifted away, then he will turn his attention toward the Page of his inner being and the Book of his soul. Then whoever was heedless of his essential self and the Accounting of his good and bad deeds will say: *"What sort of Book is this, that leaves no little thing nor any great thing uncounted?!" And they find what they did present there; and your Lord deals unjustly with no one* (18:48). This is because the modality of being of the other world is one that is (essentially) perceptive and alive; everyone there is "keen of sight," in accordance with His saying: [*You were heedless of this.*] *But We have removed your veil, and Today your vision is sharp* (50:22).

Then whoever is among the people of blessedness and *the people of the right hand* (56:27)—*he will be given his Book in his right hand* (69:19; 84:7), from the direction of the "Highest Heavens" (*'Illīyūn*), because the things which he knows are exalted, lofty, universal matters. (This is) just as He said: *Surely the Book of the pious is in the Highest Heavens. And what will make you understand what are the Highest Heavens?! An inscribed Book, witnessed by those drawn near* (83:18-21).[207]

207 The "Book" of the Intellect or noetic perfection (*'aql*) in this paragraph has a very different meaning from the "Book" of the individual soul discussed in the preceding paragraphs. Here it refers to the transcendent dimension of Being realized by the true knowers, who are the "angels drawn near to God"

But whoever is among those wretched ones who are *thrown back to the lowest of the low* (95:5) and among the people of the left hand—then *he will be given his Book in his left hand* (69:25) or from *behind his back* (84:10), from the direction of the "Great Prison" (*Sijjīn*). (This is) because his perceptions [267] are confined to lowly, particular ends, and because his Book comprises lying, slander, and all sorts of raving. So it is only fitting and appropriate that he should be thrown into the Fire and burned in the Gehenna (of corporeal being), as He said: *Surely the Book of the sinners is in the Great Prison. And what will make you understand what is the Great Prison?! An inscribed Book—Woe that Day to those who call It a lie!* (83:7-8).[208]

§8. *Principle, concerning the manner of appearance of those states which occur on the Day of the Rising*[209]

(Here we shall discuss those conditions only) in general outline; their particulars can be acquired from the Koran and Tradition in more complete and distinct detail. But *surely It is tremendous tidings,* though mankind *are turning away from It* (38:67-68), as He—Glory be to Him!—said: *How many a Sign there is in the heavens and the earth which they pass by, and they are turning away from It!* (12:105).

a. Know that the Rising, as we have indicated, is behind the veils of the (physical) heavens and earth. Its relation to this world

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(*al-malā'ika al-muqarrabūn*: cf. II-B, n. 117). The same distinction between the psychic and noetic meanings of the "Book"—corresponding to the "lesser" and "greater Rising"—is drawn more openly in §9-d below.

208 The "Hell" or "Great Prison" referred to in this paragraph is the ontological dimension of purely physical being, or what Sadra more commonly specifies by the term "Gehenna" (cf. n. 205 and all of §§10-12 and 15 below). By extension, as Sadra explains in this paragraph, it is the soul's mistaken identification of its essential nature and reality with a specific body and the particular ends and desires and accidents associated with that body—i.e., the confusion that gives rise to all the sufferings of the psychic "Hells" (§§10-12 below).

209 As already noted (§4, n. 183), the "Rising" (*al-qiyāma*) is a systematically ambiguous expression throughout Part II-C. In this chapter, Sadra moves back and forth between symbols descriptive of the revelatory awareness of transcendence (such as the "greater Rising" of the "true knower") and ones referring to the sufferings of the soul (in the "lesser Rising"), which is a level of experience familiar to everyone. Sections §8-a, b, and e-j below all refer to the noetic di-

is like that of man (as an embryo) in regard to the womb, or the bird to the egg: as long as the structure of outer appearance is not broken, the states of the inner reality cannot be revealed. For the Unseen (world) and the manifest one cannot be combined in a single place. So the "hour" (of the greater Rising) only occurs *when the earth is shaken with its shaking* (99:1), and *the heaven is split apart* (82:1), and *the planets are scattered about* (82:2), and *the stars fall down* and *the sun is darkened* (81:1-2), and *the moon is eclipsed* (175:8), and *the mountains are set in motion [and become a mirage]* (78:20), and (even) *the pregnant camels are left behind* (81:4), and *what is in the graves is thrown about and what is in the breasts is made known* (99:9-10), and *the earth and the mountains are carried up and crushed in a single crushing* (69:14).[210]

The true knower[211] may directly witness all these states and wonders when the Power of the other world over his essence (or "self") becomes manifest. Then he can hear the Call: *Whose is the Kingship Today? It is God's, the One, the Overwhelming* (40:16), and he can see [*the entire earth is His handful on the Day of the Rising, and*] *the heavens rolled up in his right hand* (39:67). And he can *see* this earth in its "shaking" and the mountains being "crushed" (and all the other conditions just mentioned), inasmuch as these things have no stability and solidity (in themselves, but only in their Ground).

For when *the veil is removed* (50:22) by means of the greater and lesser Risings, the true knower sees everything in its Source, without

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mension of being (the greater Rising); sections §8-c, d, and k refer at least partly to the individual psychic domain (the lesser Rising).

210 All of the Koranic verses in this section are understood by Sadra (following many earlier Sufi interpreters) as symbolic of the actual liberating "unveiling" of transcendence, the actual experience of transubstantiation or the "eternally renewed creation" (*khalq jadīd*) described in I, §§13-16 above. Some of these same verses were already used to allude to that reality in I, §16 (at n. 70) above.

211 *Al-'ārif*: for this key expression, and the related verbal and noun forms ("true inner knowing," *ma'rifa, 'irfān*, etc.), see the many earlier references and the further discussion of the "people of *al-A'rāf*" in §13 below. The experience of transcendence described here (as at §§4 and 5 above) corresponds to what the Sufis more commonly called the successive stages of *fanā'* (ecstatic "absorption") and *al-baqā' ba'd al-fanā'* (the "persistence after the absorption"), or the direct vision of all things "in God," as they emerge from their noetic Ground. Cf. also the Introduction, II-A, V-A, VI-A.

error in sensation or confusion in the (mind's) estimation.[212] (Because ordinarily, in this physical world, one sees) the essences (of things) in particular positions, composed of materials and forms that are continually renewed and transformed, and taken together with those different accidental qualities that complete their particular, sensible being: this is what appears in the (bodily) organs of sensation and their affective states. But when the true knower sees the essences in the Rising, it is with another mode of vision, since they do not have this (physical) mode of being when witnessed in the other world. For in the domain of the Rising, the true knower witnesses things according to their [268] primordial Realities, with an other-worldly form of perception illuminated with the Light of the Kingdom.[213]

Then (the true knower) will witness *the mountains become like carded wool* (101:5). And he will truly realize the meaning of His saying—May He be exalted!—*They ask you about the mountains. Say: "My Lord will break and scatter them like dust. Then He will leave them a barren plain in which you will see no curve or crookedness"* (20:105-107).

b. On that Day (the true knower) will witness the Fire of *Gehenna surrounding the unbelievers* (9:107). Then he will see how It burns the bodies and *consumes the skins* (4:56) and melts the

[212] The "estimative" faculty, *al-wahm*, is used here in its technical sense in Avicennan philosophical psychology, where it was conceived as the meeting place of the sensible images presented by the common sense and the intelligible forms (*ma'qūlāt*) "acquired" from the Active Intellect (n. 50 above). In this schema, the estimative faculty was the source of most mistakes in our knowledge of the external world, since the healthy senses were presumed to be normally reliable in themselves. It must be stressed that Sadra does *not* mean to imply here that the "true knower" (*'ārif*) has any sort of privileged or somehow infallible improved knowledge of particular sensible or intelligible "objects." What does characterize his "true inner knowing" (*ma'rifa*) is instead simply his inner transcending of the usual subject-object, spatiotemporal assumptions that are ordinarily imposed on our perception of the world by what is here called the "estimation." His enlightened state of consciousness involves a decisive shift in the locus of awareness, or a direct realization of identity with the noetic Source of the being that is witnessed—the "unveiling" of a different "*mode* of vision," as Sadra goes on to explain below.

[213] Here, as throughout Sadra's writings, both "Light" (*al-nūr*) and the heavenly Dominion or "Kingdom" (*al-malakūt*) refer to the universal, noetic dimension of Being.

flesh: (for) *Its fuel is men and stones* (2:24). And he will see *the oceans set aflame* (81:7).[214]

c. Now this Fire (of the transubstantiation of all beings) which burns up the bodies and skins is different from the *Fire of God, kindled, that rises over* [or: *knows well*] *men's hearts* (104:6-7). For that fire (of the soul's inner suffering in the "lesser Rising") may die down somewhat in sleep or similar states, so that some of their torment is relieved (for a while).[215]

But really their sleep has no respite in it. He—May He be exalted!—said: *As often as It dies down, We increase for them Its blazing* (17:97). That is, *as often as* this Fire of their inner being *dies down* in them, because they are heedless of the envy, resentment, hatred, enmity, or any of the other hidden fires that consume (men's) hearts, (it is only because) they are distracted (from those inner torments) by bodily activities such as gratifying the carnal desire for food, sexual activity, and so forth—not so as to assure the common well-being, but simply out of their brutish or irascible character. And so there is *increased for them* that bodily power which necessitates in them an even greater *blazing Fire.* From this it should be evident that this sensible "Fire" (of suffering in the soul) is capable of increasing or decreasing.

One of the "people of unveiling"[216] gave another interpretation of the inner meaning of this verse (17:97), as follows:

> *Whenever* the Fire which is inflicted on their bodies *dies down, We increase for them Its blazing* by transferring the torment from

[214] The most common Arabic expression for "Hell," *al-nār,* is also the most common word for "fire." Sadra plays on both meanings here in a way that is often impossible to translate; we have sometimes translated the word as "fire," but with an initial capital where the meaning of "Hell" was also clearly intended. In this paragraph (§8-b), the Hell in question is "Gehenna," that is, the ontological plane of physical being, considered in separation from its noetic Ground: cf. the explanations at n. 205 and especially §§10-12 and 15 above.

[215] Here the "Hell" in question is clearly the familiar inner "burning" of psychic anxiety and suffering—the phenomena appearing on the same level of being as the pleasures of the psychic "Gardens" or sensible "Paradise": see the explanations at n. 205 and in §§10-12 below.

[216] *Ahl al-kashf*: this is still another of the epithets Sadra uses to refer to the realized knowers; for the "unveiling" in question, see I, §§1, 2, and 10 and the many other references to the experience of transcendence. The unnamed Sufi quoted here is most likely Ibn Arabi or one of his commentators, to judge by

their outward to their inner being. And this [suffering of the soul] is the torment of their reflecting on their mortification and horror at the Day of the Rising. For the tormenting of the heart by these fires of physical nature and its being veiled from the Kingdom is far more intense than the suffering of the bodies and skins. So it is that the suffering from these reflections and imaginings of their souls is much more severe than that when their bodies are afflicted with sensible fire. Because of this it was said in verse:

The Fire [or: Hell] is Two Fires:
a Fire entirely flames;
And a *Fire* of inner reality,
rising over the spirits (104:7).

I say that both of these "Fires" are different from the (elemental) fire of this world. This is why he described the Fire (of the universal transubstantiation of material being) as "*entirely* flames"—because the elemental fire of this world is not pure fire, but rather a compound substance containing fire and other (elements), so that it can be transformed into air or water or something else. But as for the sensible (that is, psychic) Fire in the other world, that is pure fiery forms which cannot be extinguished by anything but God's Mercy.[217]

d. Among the various conditions on that Day is that *every man will flee* [269] *from his brother, and his mother and father, and his wife and children. Every man among them that Day will have a matter to suffice him* (80:34-37). This is because the soul will have

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both the style and content of this passage; however, the exact source has not been determined.

217 Here "Mercy" (*al-raḥma*) is a technical term referring to the particular psychic predisposition and determinate fate (*qadar*) of a given individual, who —as all can attest—frequently does move out of, and back into, the sensible "fire" of anxiety and psychic suffering. This special meaning of the divine "Mercy" (also intended at the end of §2, n. 175 above), must be strictly distinguished from the somewhat more common usage (for example in §11, at n. 258 below) as a synonym for the universal Self-manifestation of the "Light" of noetic Being. Like the corresponding (and ontologically "opposite") Gehenna of physical being, that universal "Mercy" refers to a constant dimension of reality that therefore can never be "extinguished" in any way. Cf. §15 below on the related problem of an "end" of Hell. For the historical background of both of these usages and their distinction in the works of Ibn Arabi, see Izutsu, *The Key*, pp. 168-175 and Index, s.vv.

separated from this body and will have left this world and everything in it, as He said: *Each of them comes alone to Him on the Day of the Rising* (19:95). For There man will encounter no one and no thing from this world, except for the results of his activities and actions, the forms of his inner intentions, and the concomitants of his (psychic) attributes and states of character.

e. And among those states, the Kingship *that Day belongs to God* (22:56). This is because There the material connections, preparatory causes, and causal factors associated with a particular location in space do not apply. For those connections are peculiar to this world of the happenings and changes that arise from the transformations of material things and their affective states through the intermediary of the directions and positions of the heavenly bodies, as has been shown in its place.[218] But as for that second (noetic) modality of being, there are only essential causes; there are no (secondary causes that are) external to the essence of the thing and do not (actually) constitute its being.[219]

In this world, too, *the Kingship belongs to God* (22:56), since the whole is according to His Will, His Direction and Organization, His Wisdom, and His Bringing it into Being. But here there are also the accidental, intermediate, and preparatory causes, so that events happen according to His Decree and His particular Determination.[220]

[218] This passage alludes to the system of cosmic determination, mediated by the motions of the heavenly bodies (and ultimately by the influences of their souls and immaterial intelligences), which was part of the accepted Aristotelean-Ptolemaic cosmology and natural philosophy in Sadra's time, as in the premodern West as well: cf. the references and discussions at n. 59 (I, §§13-15) above.

[219] For Sadra, the cosmic process of the unfolding Self-manifestation of Being (cf. I, §§5-16) which was revealed in the "greater Rising" constituted an "essential" (*dhātī*) order of "existentiating" causality (*ījād*, or "bringing into being") independent of the physical appearances to which the traditional fourfold Aristotelean analysis could be applied. It should be emphasized that this mode of immediate causality is discussed here not as a theological postulate, but as a description of the knower's direct experience of the reality of transubstantiation (*ḥaraka jawharīya*).

[220] The words "Decree" (*qaḍā'*) and "particular Determination" (*qadar*) here are technical terms, again following Ibn Arabi's usage, for two distinct levels of the ontological manifestation of Being (corresponding, respectively, to the stages discussed in I, §§5-11 and §§12-16 above). For an excellent discussion of Ibn Arabi's conception, which underlies Sadra's lengthy treatment of this ques-

f. Also among these states is that *the King* that Day *is the Truly Real* (23:116), and that *there is no injustice this Day* (40:17). This is because of what you have already learned concerning the removal in that world of the conflicts and oppositions that happen to occur (in this spatiotemporal world because of matter and its concomitants).

g. And among them is that the Rising will also be *a Day of Uniting* (64:9), because it is the times and motions (of the material world) that are the cause of things changing and succeeding one another in time; and it is the positions and directions (of material forms in space) that are the cause of presence and absence in being and nonexistence. So when this time and space (associated with material being) are removed in the (noetic, greater) Rising, then the veils are removed from between existent things, so that all of the creatures, the first ones and the last, are united together. This is the "Day of Uniting," as He—May He be exalted!—said: *A Day when He will bring you together for the Day of Uniting* (64:9).

h. Among those states, it is (also) the *Day of Separating* (37:21; etc.), because this world is an abode of confusion and deception, in which Truth and falsehood, good and evil, are confused; here antagonistic things are combined and opposites are mixed up together. But the other world is an abode of (proper) separation, discrimination, and discernment. There the opposing things are separated and the confused things are properly distinguished, as in His saying—May He be exalted!—*And the Day when the Hour occurs, on that Day they will be separated* (30:14); and His saying: *so that*

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tion in the *Asfār* and other works, see Izutsu, *The Key*, Index, s.vv. and pp. 168-187.

The historical background of this distinction in Islam lies in early theological attempts to reconcile the postulates of divine predetermination and individual free will. Here the "Decree" refers to the primordial manifestation of the divine Intellect or "Wisdom" (*al-ḥikma*/*ʿaql*) as the timeless noetic Ground of the recurring substantial forms of psychic and material being. The relation of this first level of Self-manifestation to the divine Essence and "Will" (*al-irāda*) was the subject of I, §§5-11 above. The realm of the "particular Determination" is the determinate manifestation of the noetic Forms in particular material and psychic existents, that is, in the actual phenomena of the world. At that level of manifestation, as Sadra indicates, both orders of causality—the physical, Aristotelean description and the essential "Bringing into Being" (*ījād*: cf. n. 219) or *ḥaraka jawharīya*—are equally applicable.

God may distinguish the evil from the good (8:37); and His saying: *So that the Truly Real might be verified and the untrue shown false* (8:8).

Nor is there any incompatibility between this "Separation" and that "Uniting" (in §8-g above). Indeed, this "Separating" determines and necessitates the "Uniting," as He said: *This is the Day of Separating: We have united you and the men of long ago* (77:38).

i. And among these states, those who have been freed from the graves (of attachment to physical being) and the intermediate worlds[221] will pass directly into the divine Presence at the Rising of the Hour, without the waiting and delay which is the fate of those confined to this world and shackled [270] with the bonds of (bodily) connections. This is as He said: *Then behold, they are hurrying from their tombs to their Lord!* (36:51).

j. Among those states [(there is the tradition) that "death will be suspended between Paradise and Hell in the form of a white-and-black ram"].[222]

[221] The exoteric background of this section is the popular belief, already alluded to in the chapter on the "punishment of the grave" (II-B, §5, n. 157), in a shadowy existence of disembodied souls after their death and before the universal bodily resurrection; this is the same as the popular conception of the "lesser Rising": cf. §4, n. 183 above. The Koranic term *barzakh* (cf. nn. 97, 166, 181), translated ambiguously here as "intermediate world," was traditionally used to refer to that indeterminate postmortem state of disembodied souls; at the same time it is one of Sadra's most common expressions (following Ibn Arabi) for the psychic modality of being. On that esoteric level, then, the "Rising" in question here is the passage from the inner assumption of the self-subsistent, separate reality of material and psychic forms to the enlightened awareness of those phenomena as subsisting within and manifesting the divine "Presence" (*al-ḥaḍra al-ilāhīya*).

[222] What Sadra gives here is a paraphrase of a famous divine saying found in most of the canonical *ḥadīth* collections: cf. the text and references in W. Graham, *Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam*, pp. 202-203. The esoteric meaning of the "sacrifice of Death" is actually clearly stated in the tradition itself:

> The Messenger of God—May God's blessing and peace be with him!—said: "Death is brought forth in the form of a black-and-white ram. Then a Caller calls: 'O people of Paradise!' And they stretch their necks and look, and then He says: 'Do you recognize this?' So they say: 'Yes, this is Death,' and each of them has seen it. Next He calls: 'O people of Hell!' And they stretch their necks and look, and He says: 'Do you recognize this?' And they say: 'Yes, this is Death," and each of them has seen it. Then it is sacrificed, and after that

(This means) that (physical) "death," because it is the destruction of the animal through an excess or deficiency (in the balance of the bodily humors) "will be suspended between the Paradise" (of noetic Being) "and the Hell" (of the material world) "in the form of a white-and-black ram." And it will be sacrificed by the knife of Yaḥyā—May Peace be with him!—who is the form of Life, at the command of Gabriel, who is the source of the living spirits and breathes Life into the forms of things,[223] with God's permission, so that the true reality of immortality and eternity might be made manifest through the death of (bodily) death and the life of Life.

k. And among these conditions is (another tradition) that "Hell will appear in the open spaces in the form of a camel"—because of the camel's rancorous and malevolent nature—so that man may recall his reprehensible characteristics that give rise to his torment, as in His saying: *On that Day, Gehenna is brought near: on that Day, man will remember—and how will this recollection be?!* (89:23). On that Day, a man's blameworthy attributes will stand out visibly, not concealed as they are today, as in His saying —May He be exalted!—[*The Day when man will remember all that he had striven for*] *and Hell will stand out visibly for whoever would see* (79:36). Then, in their terror at the immediate vision of (this horrible image of their) perdition and their torment, men will take refuge in God from its evil. And indeed, if God did not restrain it with His Mercy, it would break loose on a rampage that would burn up the heavens and the earth.[224]

He says: 'O people of Paradise, [for you is] eternal abiding without death!' And 'O people of Hell, [for you is] eternal abiding without death!'"

Then he [Muhammad] read: "*And warn them of the Day of Regret, when the matter will have been decided, while they are in heedlessness*—and those who are in heedlessness are the people of this world—*and they do not have true faith!*" (19:39).

Some of the parenthetical explanations in this section are based on Sadra's longer commentary in the corresponding chapter of the *Asfār* (IX, 312).

223 Yaḥyā, the Koranic name of the prophet corresponding to John the Baptist, is from the same Arabic root as "life" (*al-ḥayāt*). The commentator Sabzawārī (at the *Asfār*, IX, 312) explains that Gabriel, traditionally the angel of Wisdom in Islam, is connected with the divine breath of Life in this case—rather than the customary figure of Isrāfīl (cf. §3 above)—because "Life" is in this case synonymous with divine "Knowledge" (*'aql*: cf. I. §§5-11 above).

224 The "Hell" referred to in this section is the psychic suffering of each individual (cf. n. 205 and §§10-12 and 15 below), while the divine "Mercy" in this

§9. *Principle, concerning the "Reviewing," the "Reckoning," the "taking of the Books," and the "setting up of the Scales"*[225]

a. As for the "Reviewing" (of souls mentioned in the Koran at 11:18; 18:48; etc.), this is like passing an army in review so that one can know the soldiers' actions in the field. You have already learned (at §8-h above) that all the created beings will be "united" in a single place. Then (just as the different ranks of an army are recognizable by their insignia), *the wrongdoers will be known by their marks* (55:41), just as the good men will be known by their intentions. It is reported that the Prophet—May God's blessing and peace be with him!—was asked about God's saying—May He be exalted!—*Then he will receive an easy Reckoning* (84:8). And he responded: "That ['easy Reckoning'] is the 'Reviewing.' For whoever is examined in the Reckoning is also punished."

b. Now as for the "Reckoning" (mentioned in some forty Koranic verses), this is an expression for (the accounting of) all the details of the numbers and quantities (of men's good and evil acts and intentions) so that their sum total and final amount may be known. It is in God's Capacity—May He be exalted!—to reveal to the creatures in a single instant the final outcome of all the particular details of their actions, the sum total of the results of their various good and bad acts, and the effect of every one of their deeds and intentions, whether it be great or small.[226] For *He is the Speediest of reckoners* (6:62). As for the extended duration of the Reckoning and men's lingering in this torment (this is not due to any slowness on God's part, but) is because men's essential selves are

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case has the specific sense of the individual's particular character and predispositions, or unique determined fate (*qadar*): cf. the related usages at nn. 175 and 217 above. At the end of this section, Sadra extends this "Mercy" to the inherent order of all natural things: if Nature as a whole exhibited man's unique potential for "hellish" deviation from his noetic perfection, the whole cosmos would long ago have fallen apart.

225 In this section, §9a-c refers to Koranic symbols of the "lesser Rising," the pleasures and sufferings on the plane of the soul, while §9d-e discusses various aspects of the "greater Rising," the noetic Paradise realized by the enlightened "knower" or "man of true faith" (*al-mu'min*: cf. n. 228).

226 The mention of "intentions" here is an important reminder that the "actions" in question are essentially the manifold inner attitudes and motivations of the soul, which are only occasionally and to a limited extent manifested in external behavior. Cf. the related traditions at n. 235 below.

unable to comprehend so speedily all the particular details (of their thoughts and deeds), and cannot arrive so quickly at the final outcome of their Reckoning.

c. And as for the "taking of the Books," you have already learned (in §7) that these are the Books of men's souls and the Pages of their hearts, and that some of these are exalted and some lowly, some are given to the "right hand" and some to the "left."

As for him who is given His Book in his right hand, then he will [271] *receive an easy reckoning, and he will be returned to his people rejoicing* (84:7-9). This is because the blessed, truly faithful man, whose heart is illumined with the Light of true faith, is purified from any corruption in his inner being or any defect of his innermost self. None of the other creatures has anything to be reckoned against him, because he is not distracted from his constant attention to the world of (noetic) Sanctity by any concern for his security (in this world). It is because of this that He said: *Then as for him who is given his Book in his right hand, he will say: "Take my Book, and read It! Surely I supposed that I would meet my reckoning." So he will be in an agreeable Life, in a lofty Garden* (69:19-22).[227] For he is one who truly and inwardly knows the other world, the "Gathering," and the "Reward," one who knows well that he will encounter his Reckoning and his Book—because the "supposing" mentioned here has the meaning of absolute certainty and firm conviction.

But as for him who is given his Book in his left hand, then he will say: "Would that I had not been given my Book and did not know what was in my Reckoning!" (69:25-26). This is because he was distracted with this world and its pleasures and diversions from the other world and its goods and joys.

d. *Now as for him who is given his Book from behind his back, then he will lament and call down* [his own] *destruction, and he will be burned in blazing flames* (84:10-12). As for *calling down his destruction,* this is because of his soul's binding connection with

[227] It is only in the following section (§9-d) that Sadra openly notes that the meaning of the "Book" referred to here is no longer the state of the ordinary individual's soul with respect to its suffering or pleasure, but the "paradisiac" condition of realized union with the noetic dimension of Being, or what he here calls the "world of Sanctity" (*'ālam al-quds*) and "Light" that characterizes the "truly faithful man" (*al-mu'min*: cf. n. 229 below).

transient and perishing things. And *he will be burned in blazing flames* because the Books of the sinners and hypocrites are like blackened and ruined sheets of paper capable of being cancelled and replaced and written over again, which deserve to be burned up in the fire of *blazing flames.*

But as for one absolutely devoid of true faith, he does not even have a "Book" at all.[228]

And as for the hypocrite, when he is asked whether he has true faith, he cannot get by with the formal profession of religion which is accepted from the feeble-minded and simple folk. For he is the one of whom it was said: *He did not have true faith in God the Almighty* (69:34). In this (class of inner "hypocrites") are included the polytheists, the atheists, and those who make God of no real account, since in his inner being the hypocrite must be one of these three.[229] For There, as has been mentioned, the outward, purely formal profession of religion will avail him not at all.

[228] From here until the end of this chapter (nn. 228-236), Sadra takes up a number of familiar religious formulae, which were popularly understood in the legalistic sense of degrees of outward adherence to a system of prescribed actions and beliefs, and interprets them all in terms of the ontological perspective of the inner knowledge (*ma'rifa*) of Being realized by the "true knower" who is also the "man of true faith" (*mu'min*). Here the "Book," as Sadra states explicitly at n. 230 below, is the noetic (*'aqlī*) modality of being. Hence the "absolute unbeliever" (*al-kāfir al-maḥḍ*: the term was popularly understood as referring to atheists or those who did not follow external "Islam") would be the ontological opposite of the "man of true faith"—an inconceivable extreme, since in reality every form of being is still a manifestation of the "Book" of divine Knowledge. In fact, as Sadra quickly goes on to explain (n. 229), most men fall into the class of "hypocrites," since they are inwardly unconscious of their distance from the true reality of their nature.

[229] The "hypocrite" (*al-munāfiq*) was originally a Koranic term referring, at least historically, to the large number of pagan Arabs who made the formal profession of faith (*al-islām*: see below), but who still retained their old allegiances and tribal attitudes and thus remained a constant danger to the early Muslim community.

The "formal profession of religion" (*ṣūrat al-islām*) refers here to outward acceptance of the Muslim credo (the *shahāda*: "There is no god but God, and Muhammad is the Messenger of God") and the accepted external cultic requirements. This was in fact an early legal and theological usage of the term *islām*, in direct contrast to *īmān* ("true faith"), and considerably predates the notion of "Islam" as a particular "religion": cf. T. Izutsu, *The Concept of Belief in Islamic Theology: A Semantic Analysis of "Imān" and "Islām,"* and W. C. Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, pp. 80-118 and accompanying notes.

"Polytheists" (*mushrikūn*: those who "associate" other gods with God) is like-

Know that this "Book" (mentioned at 84:10) is something other than the "Book" of the deeds of the sinners. For this is the Book of *those who [when God had made a covenant with them], were given the Book* [(and commanded): *"Show It forth clearly to all men, and do not hide It!"*]. *But they threw It behind their backs, and sold It for a small price* (3:187). This is the Book (of noetic perfection) sent down to each man, not the book of his deeds.[230] Because when he *threw It behind his back* (3:187; etc.), *he supposed that It would never return* (84:14)—that is, (the word "supposed" here means that) he was firmly convinced, as in His saying: *That which you supposed concerning your Lord has destroyed you!* (41:23). But on the Day of the Rising it will be said to him—that is, to the hypocrite—"Take your *Book from behind your back* (84:10)!"—that is, from where you *had thrown It* during your life in this world. This is like His saying—May He be exalted!—*It will be said* [to all the hypocrites]: *"Turn back behind yourselves and search for Light!"* (57:13).[231]

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wise a Koranic term, applied historically to the pagan Arabs and, to some extent, to the Christians. In Sadra's philosophic understanding, this is the most common human condition, in which quiddities (cf. I, §§1-4)—whether of a particular "body" or some other limited conception of the "self"—are treated as ultimate, self-subsistent realities.

The "atheist" (*al-jāḥid*) is someone who verbally professes to "deny" or "reject" God.

And the last group of "hypocrites," the *mu'aṭṭilūn*, are those who outwardly accept the notion of a God and the external forms of religious practice, but who inwardly deny Him any reality and efficacy in their own experience. According to Sadra's remarks in the Prologue (at n. 8) and elsewhere, he included in this category particularly the mass of legalist religious scholars engaged in the "idolatry" of symbols and historical forms without any deeper understanding of their original intentions and universal inner meaning. Again, most of these usages build on similar distinctions in the writings of Ibn Arabi.

230 Sadra's discussion of the "Book" of noetic Being here presupposes the earlier discussion of that symbol (and the prophetology it implies) in I, §8 above. It is integrally connected with the related Koranic themes of the divine "Covenant" (*al-mīthāq*)—both with Adam (7:172) and with the other "people of the Book"—of man's perfect "primordial nature" (*al-fiṭra*: cf. II-A, n. 102), and the special rank of "Adam" as the "Perfect Man." Sadra understands all of these symbols as references to the human soul's unique capacity for realizing its true nature as the noetic Self—or for "throwing away" and "turning its back" on the possibility of that perfection, an act of utmost "hypocrisy."

231 The largest context of this verse (57:12-15), which was widely commented upon among the Sufis, is essential for grasping the full immediacy of Sadra's

e. As for the *setting up of the Scales* (21:47), (the word) "scale" or "measure" (*al-mīzān*) is an expression for the correct standard by which one knows the specific quantity or value of something. A "measure" may be a specific instrument, or it may be something else, but the measure of a thing is always of the same kind as the thing it measures.

Hence [272] the "Measure" of the other world is not the same as the measure of this world, nor are the measures of (the different sorts of) knowledge and actions like those scales used for weighing bodies and weights. (The "Scales" of this world and of the other world are) no more alike than the measures of wheat, barley, curds, or syrup are like the "measure" of poetry, which is its metrical patterns; or the "measure" of thinking, which is logic; or grammar, in the case of syntax and inflection; or the astrolabe and the movements of the heavenly bodies, for quantities of time; or the plumb-line, for perpendiculars; or the compass and ruler, for circles and straight lines. But Mind is the measure of all things.[232]

In sum, the Scales of the other world are of another sort (than those of this world), since the Books and Pages (of men's souls) are placed in Them and then "weighed" with Them. And among what has come down from our Imams—May peace be with them!—on this subject, there is the following related by Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn Bābawayh: "[the Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq] was asked by Hishām ibn Sālim about the meaning of God's saying—May He be glorified and exalted!—*We shall set up the Just Scales on the Day of the Rising* (21:47). He replied: 'These are the prophets and their appointed heirs [the imams].' "[233]

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allusion here. The situation is one in which the "people of true faith" (*al-mu'minūn*) have just entered Paradise and become separated from their co-religionaries who were "hypocrites" in this life. The latter, while being thrown into Hell, appeal to their former companions for intercession, saying, "*Look at us, that we might borrow from your Light!*" The reply of the truly faithful is what Sadra has quoted here. Here "Light" (*al-nūr*) is understood as synonymous with the "Book," or noetic dimension of Being realized by the "true knower."

232 "Mind" here is the Arabic *al-'aql*, which is translated elsewhere as "Nous" or "Intellect" (or a derived form of those nouns).

233 The conception underlying this saying of the prophets and the Imams as true knowers or "Complete Human Beings" who have fully realized the noetic aspect of man's being is common to virtually all the Shiite traditions quoted in

Know that every action of the body or the heart, every memory or intention, is placed in this Scale. And something else can always be entered against (each of these acts) and balance it out—except for the Word of the assertion of divine Unity (symbolized) in the saying "There is no god but God," (when spoken) in complete sincerity.[234] Because every action has its contrary in this world of opposites; but the assertion of divine Unity has no opposite except for polytheism—and these two things cannot be combined on a single scale, because the enduring certainty (of divine Unity) cannot be joined with its contrary in a single heart, nor can it be followed (by its contrary) in the same subject. As we have intimated earlier (II-A, §10), the soul of the truly faithful man who truly realizes the divine Unity is so different from the soul of the complete unbeliever in its substance and essence that the two actually differ in species, not simply as particular individuals.

In short, there is nothing at all, whether saying or deed or intention, that can match or equal the Word (of divine Unity) on the other side of the Scales—much less begin to outweigh it. Because of this it is related from Abū 'Abdallāh (the Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq) that he said: "Just as nothing [in the way of externally 'good' actions] is of any avail when accompanied by unbelief, so also nothing [in the way of misdeeds] can be of harm when accompanied by true faith." And Abū al-Ṣāmit reported the following from (the Imam Ja'far)—May peace be with him!—"[he said]: 'God will surely par-

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this work. Most of those traditions, like this one, derive from the Shiite Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq. In this saying, "appointed heirs" translates the Arabic *awṣiyā'* (plural of *waṣī*: literally, the "trustee" or "executor" of an estate), which is a key technical term in Shiite imamology. According to this theory, all of the prophets had a similar essential counterpart (such as Aaron, in the case of Moses) who was responsible for preserving and explicating the prophetic message—especially the inner, spiritual side not fully evident in the forms and symbols of the particular religious Law. This and related terms of Shiite imamology are developed further in §14 below.

234 The final proviso (*mukhliṣan*) is all-important in this case. What Sadra is pointing to, of course, are not the mere words, which are part of the fomulaic "profession of faith (the *shahāda*) constituting the minimal level of cultic adherence (that is, the "*islām*" discussed in n. 299). Rather, it is those words taken as expressions of the complete inner realization of the transcendent Unity of Being, the condition of inner clarity possessed in full only by the "true monotheist" (*al-muwaḥḥid*) who has actualized the reality corresponding to the "assertion of divine Unity" (*al-tawḥīd*: cf. I, §§2-4).

don the man of true faith, even if he should bring something like that.' And he gestured with his hand [to indicate its extent]. I asked him: 'Even if he should come with [sins as great] as those forms [of the heavens, mountains, and other enormous objects]?' Then he replied: 'Yes, by God! Even if he should bring such forms as those.' Then he said 'Yes, by God!' two more times." And it is reported from the Prophet—May God's blessing and peace be with him!—that "[the man of true faith will enter Paradise] even if he should commit adultery or steal."[235]

Know, then, that the bodily activities, both good and evil, are all entered among the things on these Scales. As for the inner actions (of the soul), they cannot be measured in any sensible scales; instead they are weighed in terms of Justice, which is the Scale of judgment concerning inner meaning and reality. For the sensible is measured by a sensible standard; [273] and inner meaning and reality is measured by its own (appropriate standard). This is why a man's acts are weighed according to the way they are "written" (in the Book of his soul).

The last thing of all to be placed in this Scale is man's saying "Praise be to God!," and this is enough to fill It up. This is what the Prophet—May God's blessing and peace be with him!—alluded to when he said: " 'Praise be to God!' fills up the Scale."[236] And among those subtle insights revealed (to the true knower) is that every man's Scale is precisely proportionate to his (inner and outer) actions, being neither too large nor too small.

235 For the canonical sources of this tradition, see Wensinck, *Concordance*, II, 346. The extreme contrast drawn in these sayings between saving inner "knowledge" or "true faith" and the more popular, exoteric conceptions of moral righteousness should be familiar from the analogous parables and stories in the Gospels; the literature of Sufism contains numerous illustrations of the same theme. It should be clear from Sadra's extreme care in protecting the structures of naive popular belief that he did not intend for such paradoxical sayings to be construed in an antinomian or quietistic manner: see the discussion of the levels and intentions of his writing in the Introduction, III-E, IV-C, and all of V and VI.

236 For the sources of this tradition, see Wensinck, *Concordance*, II, 203. Sadra evidently understands this saying in the same way as the remark concerning the "profession of divine Unity" at n. 234 above: both formulae are taken as symbolic of the person's degree of inner "polytheism" (*shirk*) and "hypocrisy" or of true unitive awareness of Being—that is, of his realization that all "praise" (and all else) really is "God's." This condition of enlightenment is the noetic "Para-

§10. *Principle, concerning Paradise and Hell*[237]

It must be known that the Paradise that our ancestor Adam and his wife left because of their sin is different from *the Paradise that is promised to the godfearing* (13:35; 25:15; 47:15).[238] That is because this latter Paradise only comes to be (for the individual) "after" the destruction of this world, the passing away of the heavens and the earth, and the end of the period of the world of movements and changes. Yet these Paradises coincide in their reality and level (of being) and dignity, because both of them are together and by essence the Abode of Life and Everlastingness. (Unlike material things, they are) not being continually renewed and transformed, not transient, evanescent, and forever passing away.

The explanation of this is that the "Ends" (of man's psychic and noetic ascent) are parallel and exactly correspond to the "Beginnings" (or First Principles of the descent of Being), and that physi-

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dise" encompassing all Being (cf. §§10-11), which is why it is said to "fill up the Scale" of the Intellect (n. 232).

237 Beginning here, in §§10-15, the exoteric focus of discussion apparently shifts from the events of the Last Judgment to a sort of topography of Heaven and Hell. On the philosophic level, however, the discussion continues to revolve around the relation of the two modalities of psychic and noetic being (and the corresponding states of consciousness) that together constitute the "other world." What is new in these chapters (beginning with the second paragraph here) is a more open concern with the cosmological and ontological context of these psychic phenomena—that is, the "Origin" outlined in Part I. In these discussions the term "Paradise" (*al-janna*: literally, "the Garden"), like that of "Hell" (*al-nār*: cf. n. 205), is used ambiguously: sometimes it refers to pleasing "sensible" psychic states, in which case it is parallel and relative to the corresponding psychic "Hells." At other times, it refers to the all-encompassing noetic dimension of Being—in which case it is opposed to the insubstantial "Gehenna" of physical existence. In referring to Heaven and Hell on the level of psychic experience, Sadra, following the Koran, sometimes uses the dual or plural forms; in those cases I have translated those forms of *al-janna* as "Garden(s)."

238 In fact, as Sadra explains below, the two "Paradises" mentioned here are actually the *same* noetic plane of reality, only considered from two different points of view: in the first case, as the ontic Source of all Life and Being; in the second case, as that transcendent plane is approached and actualized by a particular human individual. For the "Adamic" Paradise as the Intellect or noetic Being, see I, §8 (n. 44); II-A, §8 (n. 94); and the related themes mentioned at n. 230 above. It must be stressed that the figure of Adam in the Koran (2:30-39; 7:172; etc.) and in subsequent Islamic tradition often differs significantly from that familiar in Christian theology, particularly with regard to the meaning of the "Fall."

cal death is the beginning of the (soul's) movement of Return to God, just as physical life is the end of the movement of (ontic) descent from God. For every one of the different ranks (of being) in the arc of ascent has its exact counterpart among the ranks of the arc of descent. The philosophers and the true knowers have likened these two chains (of being) to the two semicircular arcs of a circle, as an indication that the second, returning movement was a sort of "turning around" or reversion, and not a continued straight motion.[239]

Now that this has been established, you must know that Paradise (or: "the Garden") is actually twofold: there is the sensible Garden (of the soul), and the noetic Garden. This is as He—May He be exalted!—said: *But for him who fears the Station of His Lord there are two Gardens* (55:46), and *in those two Gardens there is a pair of every kind of fruit* (55:52). The sensible "fruit" (of pleasing states of the soul) is for the *people of the right hand* (56:27); while the noetic is for *those drawn near to God* (4:172; etc.), who are themselves the *Highest Heavens* (83:18-20).[240] And Hell, likewise, is twofold: there is the sensible Hell (of painful states of the soul), and the Hell of inner reality (the "Gehenna" of physical existence, or distance from noetic being), as was mentioned (at §8-c above).

Now both the sensible Paradise and the sensible Hell are worlds possessing extension. The first of these is the (outward) form of God's Mercy; and the other is the form of His Anger, as in His saying—May He be exalted!—*And he upon whom My Anger alights, surely he has fallen to destruction* (20:81). Therefore His Anger assails the oppressors and shatters those of overweening pride.[241]

239 "Turning around" here translates the Arabic *in'iṭāf*, corresponding to the Plotinian *epistrōphē*. For the central role of this ontological cycle of Origin and Return in the formal exposition of Sadra's thought, see the Introduction, IV-B, V, and VI, and his own remarks in the Prologue, at nn. 9 and 10.

240 Cf. the discussions of the "people of the right hand" in §§7 and 9-c above. For the "angels drawn near to God" as one of Sadra's favorite expressions for the realized knowers and "men of true faith," see II-B at the beginning (n. 117) and elsewhere above. The "Highest Heavens" (*'illīyūn*) were already taken as symbolic of noetic Being in §6 (n. 207) above.

241 The Paradise and Hell intended in this paragraph are "sensible" only in the sense that they include all phenomena at the psychic level of being, including (as shown in II-A, §§3-5) even the forms of the "external" senses; but the

(But in a very different sense, at the level of the noetic "Paradise"), God's Mercy is of His very Essence, while His Anger is only incidental to It, as He proved with His saying: "My Mercy preceded my Anger," and His saying: *I shall strike whom I will with My Punishment, but My Mercy includes all things* (7:156).[242] Therefore Paradise was created by (His) Essence, but Hell was only created incidentally (to It). And beneath this there is a secret.[243]

You have already learned that (the "sensible," psychic) Paradise and Hell have no spatial location in the outward aspect of this world, whether in [274] its heights or its depths, since everything that is located in the spaces of this (material) world is continually being renewed and destroyed, changing and passing away: for everything like that is of this world. But Paradise and Hell are from the other world: *How wonderful is the final Abode!* (13:24). So they each have a place behind the veils of the (physical) heavens, al-

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experiences in question here are by no means limited to the phenomena at that level of perception. "Outward form" (*ṣūra*) is used here in the sense of "manifestation" (*maẓhar*) or determinate "theophany" (*tajall*), as Sadra goes on to explain below. The expressions for divine "Anger" (*al-ghaḍab*) and "Mercy" are used here in a very different sense from Sadra's more common usage in the next paragraph (at n. 242). Here they refer to our familiar perception of our experience as either pleasing or oppressive—what the Sufis spoke of as the theophanies of "Beauty" (*jamāl*) and "Majesty" (*jalāl*) within the divine Whole.

242 For the famous *ḥadīth qudsī* (a saying in which God is the direct speaker, as in the Koran) quoted here, see Furūzānfar, *Aḥādīth-i Mathnawī*, pp. 26, 152. Sadra's interpretation of these symbols here (and more extensively in §11 below) closely follows the understanding of Ibn Arabi: cf. his *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, pp. 177-180, and the explanation in Izutsu, *The Key*, pp. 109 ff.

In this paragraph "Mercy" is understood in the usual sense of the eternal cosmic Self-manifestation of Being, the "Breath of the Merciful" (I, §9). From that perspective, the divine "Anger" is nothing but the relative "nonbeing" or ontic privation (*'adam*: cf. I, §1-2, n. 14) that is required by the specific determinations of all particular manifest beings "outside" (or considered as "separate" from) the Absolute Being—that is, as they are ordinarily experienced in the unenlightened consciousness. In this sense, "Anger" is close in meaning to the "Gehenna" of relative, material being.

243 "Secret" here translates *sirr*; for other references to this key term, see II-A, §§3-4 (nn. 80-81). In this case, as in most of the others in this book, the "secret" in question is the experience of transcendence—that is, the "unveiling" of the full reality and extent of the divine Compassion that reveals the relative nature of the "Hells" (but also of the "Gardens") of material and psychic existence. In this sense the *sirr* is the same as the innermost "Heart" or noetic Reality of man, which Sadra says is a gateway only to Paradise (§11, n. 264); cf. also the Concluding Testament, nn. 309-311.

though they do have places of manifestation in this world, according to their particular modalities of being.[244]

The traditions that are reported specifying particular places in this world as locations of Paradise or Hell should all be interpreted according to this (that is, as particular places of manifestation of psychic and noetic Realities). Among these are the saying of the Prophet—May God's blessings be upon him and his Family!—"Between my grave and the pulpit where I stand is one of the meadows of Paradise," and his saying: "The grave of the man of true faith is one of the meadows of Paradise, but the grave of the hypocrite is one of the pits of Hell."[245] Another report (of this sort says) that one of the springs of Paradise flows out on Mount Arvand. And there is a saying transmitted from Abū Ja'far (the Shiite Imam Muḥammad al-Bāqir)—May peace be with him!—that "there is a Garden that God created in the far West, and the waters of your Euphrates here flow forth from there. . . ." Similarly, it is reported that Barhūt (a sulphurous stream in Hadhramaut) is one of the rivers of Hell. Traditions of this sort are very numerous and differ widely in their external expressions. We have mentioned the proper way to reconcile them in our book *al-Mabda' wa al-Ma'ād* ("The Origin and the Return").[246]

The amazing thing, though, is that any reasonable man could doubt the (actual reality of) the state of being of the other world and of the sensible (psychic) Paradise and Hell—and yet not doubt

244 In this paragraph Paradise and Hell are again understood on the level of the soul, referring to pleasant and unpleasant forms of experience. The ontology of levels of "manifestation" (*maẓāhir*) of Being presumed here is outlined more explicitly at §11 below. Here Sadra stresses that the being of the physical world is not ultimately separate from the more extensive psychic realm, since together they constitute the "modalities of *particularized* being" (*nash'āt juz'īya*) of the archetypal noetic "Realities" (the *ḥaqā'iq*).

245 For the first of these traditions, see Wensinck, *Concordance,* II, 319-320. For the second (already quoted in II-B, §5, at n. 165), see Furūzānfar, *Aḥādīth-i Mathnawī*, p. 140.

246 The reference is to pp. 474-484 in the edition by J. Āshtiyānī; those pages are actually an abridgment of the corresponding chapter in the *Asfār* (IX, 322-328), which is summarized here. The only additional matter in *al-Mabda' wa al-Ma'ād* not in this chapter is a much longer selection of traditions concerning supposed earthly or celestial locations for Hell and Paradise; the underlying philosophic explanation is the same as that Sadra gives here.

at all what he sees in his own dreams![247] Moreover, this world and the other world fall together under the category of relation, because (the expression for) "this world" (*dunyā*) is derived from its "nearness" (*dunuww*), and the "other world" (*ākhira*) is derived from its relative "posteriority" (*ta'akhkhur*). These are two conditions for man: the nearer of the two is this world and the further one is the other world. But the two relative terms can (only) be truly known together, so that he who does not truly know the other world and does not affirm its actual being does not, in reality, truly know this world either! This is as He—May He be exalted!—said: *Certainly you have known the first state of being. Why, then, do you not recollect* [the reality of the other world]? (56:62).[248]

Yet I am even more amazed at most of the philosophers and followers of Aristotle, such as Abū 'Alī (Avicenna) and those who followed in his footsteps, when they deny that the soul has some form of being *before* the body, although they do recognize that it does have some form of being and survival after the body.[249] And like

[247] Dreams have been one of the most frequently cited illustrations of the psychic modality of being in ontologies analogous to Sadra's in many other traditions, since they readily suggest an autonomous field of reality not easily reducible to the levels of physical and public being. But it must be understood that for Sadra the level of psychic reality includes all of the most ordinary and unexceptionable sense-perceptions—in fact, *all* experience—as well as more exotic or "visionary" phenomena: cf. the basic arguments in II-A, §§3-5 and I, §10 above.

[248] This Koranic quotation is more than an attempt to lend scriptural coloring to Sadra's particular version of the Platonic theory of *anamnēsis*. The verb translated here as "recollect" (from the Arabic root *dh-k-r*) has a twofold significance. On the more literal level, this subject of the "remembrance" of man's true state of being, which occurs very frequently in the Koran, ties in closely with the themes of man's "primordial nature" (*fiṭra*) and the pre-eternal "covenant" (*al-mīthāq*), in the person of "Adam," which Sadra has already evoked on several occasions. At the same time, these Koranic injunctions were understood by the Sufis as the scriptural foundation for the practice of *dhikr* (silent or open "invocation" of divine names and ritual formulae), which was one of the most essential of their contemplative disciplines, corresponding to the "Prayer of the Heart" in Eastern Christian monasticism and the function of the mantra in many forms of yoga. That meaning is clearly relevant in this context, given Sadra's frequent allusions to the necessity of pursuing those disciplines in order to achieve the essential premises of his discussion. Cf. the Introduction, II.

[249] For Sadra's defense of the ontic autonomy of soul and its priority as a "form of being" (*kaynūna*) ontologically "prior" to bodies, see II-A, §8 above. In fact, as Sadra clearly pointed out in II-A, §11, Avicenna and his followers were quite hesitant as well about granting the individual soul any sort of

them are those who have doubts about the "Gathering" of these bodies and their Return to the other world, asking: "Where do these bodies go, and where do they return to in the other world after the destruction of this world?"[250] Yet they never doubt their origination (in this world), and never ask: "Where did these bodies come from?"

So know, my beloved, that we came to this world from God's Paradise, the Domain of Holiness in Which are sanctified all the holy ones. We came from that (highest noetic) Paradise to the Abode of Life and the Paradise of the (psychic) bodies; and from There we came into this world, the abode of activity without reward. Then we go from this world to the Abode of the Reward, where there is no (physical) activity. And among us, those whose primordial nature has remained sound and whose actions have been good passes on to God's Paradise, if he was among *those drawn near to God* (4:172; etc.), [275] the perfect ones in this world. Or he goes to Paradise of Life (on the plane of the soul), if he was one of *the people of the right hand* (69:27).[251]

But he whose actions were evil and whose heart was darkened (by ignorance of the noetic nature of Being) remains beneath the Hell-fire of God's Anger, in Gehenna, *abiding there for as long as the heavens and earth endure—except for what your Lord wishes. Surely*

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meaningful "survival." The real issue at stake here (as in II-A and B), however, cannot be grasped on the level of this sort of literalist eschatology; cf. the Introduction, VI-A. More fundamentally, it has to do with the understanding of the ontological status of psychic reality, that is, the full range of human experience, in relation to physical being. The heart of that controversy can be seen more clearly in Avicenna's consistent denial of any ontological self-subsistence to the "world of soul" in his commentary on Plotinus (whose philosophy is extremely close to Sadra's on this point): see "Les notes d'Avicenne sur la 'Theologie d'Aristote'," translated by G. Vajda.

250 On the philosophic level, this sentence evidently alludes to the famous doubts about the nonintellective "survival" of souls that were historically associated with the interpretations of Alexander (and in the West, with Averroes), which Sadra discussed in II-A, §11 above. Sadra's own response to this question takes up all of II-A and B above.

251 For Sadra's use of the terms "primordial nature" (*al-fiṭra*) and "those drawn near to God" as expressions for the noetic plane of being and those "true knowers" who have fully realized it, see the references in II-A and B above. The "people of the right hand" was already used as an expression for those enjoying the relative "Paradise" of psychic pleasure in §§7 and 9-c above.

He is the Doer of all that He wills (11:107).[252] One of the "people of unveiling" (Ibn Arabi) said:[253]

> Know—May God safeguard both us and you!—that Hell is among the most prodigious of the creations. It is God's Prison in the other world, and is called "Gehenna" because of the great depth of Its bottom, since the bedouin Arabs called a well "Gehenna" when it was extremely deep. It contains terrible heat and cold—both of them to the most extreme degree; and between Its highest and lowest point is a distance of 7500 years. . . . It is an abode whose hot winds are a scorching fire, and with no fuel for their flames but "men and the stones" which they have taken as gods. These are set on fire by the jinn, as He—May He be exalted!—said: *Its fuel is men and stones* (2:24), and His saying: *They will be thrown over into It, they and the tempters and the armies of Satan, all together* (26:94-95). . . .[254]
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> Now one of the strangest things reported from the Prophet is that he was sitting one day with his companions in the mosque, when they heard a thunderous crash and became frightened. Then he—May God's blessing and peace be with him!—said: "Do you know what that terrible crashing was?" They answered: "God and His Messenger know best." He said: "That was a stone dropped from the top of Gehenna seventy years ago; just now it

252 The controversial question of the eternal "abiding" of sinners in the "Gehenna" of physical existence is taken up again as the explicit subject of §15 below.

253 The "people of unveiling" (*ahl al-kashf*) is one of several related epithets Sadra uses to refer to the accomplished Sufis and "true knowers": cf. the related terms at nn. 173, 174, 193, 216, 280, 287, and 300. The majority of these references are to Ibn Arabi. Ibn Arabi is explicitly identified as the author of this passage from the *Futūḥāt* in the corresponding chapter of the *Asfār* (IX, 325); there Sadra even mentions the chapter number and title ("Concerning the True Reality of Gehenna"). This is one of several places in the *'Arshīya* where Sadra intentionally suppresses any explicit mention of Ibn Arabi, along with important or potentially controversial portions of the text being quoted.

254 At two places in this paragraph Sadra quietly omits long intervening passages in Ibn Arabi's text that give the actual explanation of the symbols discussed here; those passages make it very clear that he is referring to a "Hell" that men already create (or discover) for themselves in this world. The "stones" they "worship as gods," for example, are all the material objects of this world, considered as self-subsistent goods; the "heat" and "bitter cold" refer to unpleasant psychic states; and so on.

reached the bottom of Gehenna, and that crash was [the sound of] its falling down There." And he had no sooner finished speaking than there arose the sound of crying and screaming in the house of a certain hypocrite who had just died and whose age was seventy years. Then the Messenger of God said: "God is Most Great!," and so his companions realized that this stone was that man, and that he had been falling down through Gehenna ever since God had created him; when he died, he ended up at Its bottom. For He—May He be exalted!—said: *Surely the hypocrites are in the very lowest level of Hell* (4:145). Behold how marvelous is God's Speech, and how fitting the Prophet's description to his companions!

§11. *Principle, concerning which divine Reality caused Paradise and Hell to be manifest, and the (Koranic) allusion to their gates*

Know that every one of the true inner meanings has a primordial Reality (or noetic "Name" in the divine Knowledge), an image, and a place of manifestation.[255]

Man, for example, is a universal Reality: It is the noetic Man who is the locus of manifestation of the comprehensive divine name "God" (*Allāh*),[256] and God's Word and the "Spirit" ascribed to Him

[255] The basic ontological framework in this section is actually fairly simple, although expressed in Ibn Arabi's complex symbolism of the divine "Names." The "universal" or "primordial Reality" (*al-ḥaqīqa al-aṣlīya al-kullīya*) refers to the archetypal noetic Forms, first introduced in I, §6 (n. 32) above. The "image" (*mathal*) or "locus of manifestation" (*maẓhar*) of these Realities refers to the infinite determinate phenomena, on the psychic and physical levels of being, in which these Forms are actually manifested.

[256] Ibn Arabi and his commentators expressed his Neoplatonic ontology in terms of a highly complex symbolism of divine Names, corresponding to the different levels or "Presences" (*ḥaḍarāt*) within the transcendent Unity of the divine Essence; for details, see Izutsu, *The Key*, Index, s.vv. Within that system, which Sadra adapts to his own purposes here, as throughout Part I, the divine Name "God" (*Allāh*) was considered the "comprehensive Name" (*al-ism al-jāmi'*), or the noetic dimension of Being encompassing the pleroma of more particular "Names" (that is, the Platonic Forms). Sadra has already referred to this as the "Universal Intellect" (*al-'aql al-kull*), the divine "Word" or "Spirit," the "Lamp-niche of Prophecy," and so on. The central point, as he stresses here, is that the noetic dimension to which all these symbols refer is also the "Perfect Man" (*al-insān al-kāmil*), referring to man's unique status as the microcosm

in His saying: *His Word that He delivered to Mary, and a Spirit from Him* (4:171) and in His saying—May He be exalted!—*And I breathed into him* [i.e., Adam] *from My Spirit* (16:29). This Reality has particular images and specific individual instances, [276] such as (the individuals) Zayd and 'Amr. And it also has different places of manifestation, such as the senses and the tablets of the mind.[257]

Paradise, likewise, has a universal Reality: It is the Spirit of the Universe and the locus of manifestation of the divine Name "the Merciful," as indicated in His saying—May He be exalted!—*That Day We shall gather the godfearing to the Merciful, as an honored company* (19:85).[258] And It has a universal image, which is the supreme *Throne where sits the Merciful* (20:5). Its outward form, according to the tradition, is "the Earth of Paradise [which] is the Pedestal [of the Throne], and Its roof is the Throne of the Merciful." Paradise also has Its particular images, which are the hearts of the people of true faith, according to the tradition: "The heart of the man of true faith is the Throne of the Merciful," and "the heart of the man of true faith is the House of God."[259] Finally, It has

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(cf. §12 below) and knower who mirrors in his threefold being the inner structure of all reality.

Hence the Reality of "Paradise" and the divine "Mercy," or the macrocosm discussed in the following paragraph, is actually the same noetic Being, only considered as the object, rather than the subject, of all experience.

257 The word translated here as "senses" (*al-mashā'ir*) could more adequately be paraphrased as "places of perception or awareness"—whether those be "internal" or "external." According to Sadra's explanation of this passage in the corresponding chapter of the *Asfār* (IX, 330-338), the "tablets of the mind" (*al-alwāḥ al-dhihnīya*) mentioned here refer to the "common sense" (including memory) and the "estimative" faculty (cf. n. 212) in the prevailing Avicennan psychology. Together with the five "external" senses, they make up the seven "gates" to the psychic Paradise and Hell that are discussed later in this chapter (at nn. 260 and 263).

258 "Paradise," in this paragraph, refers to the same comprehensive noetic Reality as in the preceding one, only here considered in its "objective" manifestation as the macrocosm, the physical (and psychic) universe, instead of the microcosmic "Perfect Man" (n. 256). The identity of the two aspects of Being is made explicit at n. 259 below. As already mentioned several times, the divine "Mercy" or "Compassion," in this cosmic sense, is synonymous with the eternal "unfolding Being" (*al-wujūd al-munbasiṭ*) in the language of Ibn Arabi: cf. Izutsu, *The Key*, pp. 109-132, and I, §9 above. This is the same reality as Sadra's transubstantiation of Being (*ḥaraka jawharīya*), outlined in I, §§13-16 above.

259 Here Sadra mentions both of the meanings of the divine "Throne" (*'arsh*)

both universal and particular places where It is manifest and is witnessed (in the soul), which are the "levels" of Paradise and Its "gates."[260]

Similarly, Hell has a universal Reality, which is distance from God's Mercy: this is the outward form of His "Anger," and the locus of manifestation of (such) divine Names (as) "the Compeller" and "the Requiter."[261] And It has a universal image, which is the "Hellfire" of Gehenna (that is, of insubstantial material being), and Its general and particular places of manifestation, which are Its different "levels" and "gates." It has seven levels beneath the Pedestal (that is, the outermost heavenly sphere), for in that Pedestal are the roots of the *Lotus-tree of the Boundary* (53:14, 16) (that is, the "Tree of Life"),[262] and from There also grows the *Tree of Zaqqūm,*

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alluded to in the title of this book: cf. n. 1 and the Introduction, V-A. The first of those is the noetic dimension of Being that is the "heart" (*al-qalb*: cf. n. 264 below) or the inner essence of man. The second is cosmological, referring to the empyrean, the place (or rather no-place) "beyond" and enclosing the physical cosmos (that is, the "Pedestal," as explained in n. 262 below), which is therefore its "outward form" (*ṣūra*).

260 In addition to the common names for Paradise and Hell, the Koran mentions several rarer terms (a total of seven in each case) that were traditionally depicted as specific localities or "levels" in the other world, in a fashion resembling the iconography of Dante's *Divine Comedy.* For Sadra's identification of these "levels" and "gates" with the inner and outer senses (that is, with the whole field of determinate psychic experience), see the references at nn. 257 and 263. It should be noted that the "Paradise" mentioned in this last sentence is no longer the universal Reality of noetic Being in Its entirety, but rather the limited aspect of subjectively pleasing phenomena of the soul—that is, the same level of being as the sensible "Hell" discussed in §10 above.

261 In this paragraph Sadra moves back and forth between the two senses of "Hell" first distinguished at n. 205 above.

262 Sadra's symbolic references at this point are extremely complex. The key images all have an inner experiential level of meaning and a cosmological one. The best account of the cosmological aspect, including the two "world-trees" alluded to here, is to be found in *Hamlet's Mill,* by G. de Santillana and H. von Dechend.

Cosmologically, the "Pedestal" (*al-kursī*) is understood here as the outermost sphere of the fixed stars, at the beginning of the realm of material and temporal existence; beneath it, according to the traditional Ptolemaic-Aristotelean conception, were the spheres of the seven "planets" (including the sun and moon) which were considered the ultimate material causes of all earthly events (cf. n. 218 above). Hence the traditional iconography of the "Tree of Life," with its "roots" in the highest heavens (proceeding from the "Throne," the immaterial Source of Being) and its branches growing down into all the ramifications of the visible universe. Symbolically, the "Pedestal" (and the levels of

the food of the sinner (44:43-44), *Whose fruit is like the heads of devils* (37:65). All the deeds of the sinners and the hypocrites come to Hell in the end, since Hell and Its pavilions *are surely surrounding the unbelievers* (9:49). Finally Hell has particular images, which are the individual substances of souls—of those souls that are darkened and *tumbling down* (101:9) to perdition, and breasts cramped and distressed and in turmoil and confusion.

The gates of Hell are seven, as in His saying—May He be exalted!—*It has seven gates, and each of those gates has an allotted section* (15:44). And these very same gates (that is, the forms of perception in the world of soul) are themselves the gates of Paradise for Its people![263] For these gates are shaped like that kind of door which, when it is opened up on one place, at the same time closes off another place. So the act of shutting these gates against Paradise is precisely the same as opening them up to Hell.

Except (that Paradise has another gate which is not of this kind:) the Gate of the Heart, which is forever sealed shut against the people of Hell.[264] *The gates of Heaven will not be opened unto*

Paradise and Hell "below" it) also stand here for the infinite variety of phenomena experienced in the psychic, intermediate plane of being. Of course, those phenomena may be subjectively judged as either wrathful or beneficent—a point Sadra makes more explicitly in the following paragraphs (n. 263)—from which comes their division into the "two" cosmic Trees, of Life and of Hell. These two are "like mirrors," as the commentator Sabzawārī adds at this point in the *Asfār*.

The Koranic "Lotus-tree of the Boundary" (*sidrat al-muntahā*) was traditionally understood as one of the final stages of the Prophet's archetypal ascension (the *mi'rāj*) through the "seven heavens" to the threshold of the divine Presence. The passage alluded to here (53:13-18) apparently refers to one of the culminating stages of that vision, when *he saw one of the greatest Signs of his Lord* (53:18); this "Lotus-tree" is specifically said to be *near the Paradise of the Refuge* (53:15). The close juxtaposition of this "Tree" of Paradise with the Hell-tree *Zaqqūm*, however, was not so traditional: Sadra links the two images here in order to stress the essential relativity of Paradise and Hell at this level of being and consciousness.

[263] That the "gates" of Paradise and Hell—understood as pleasing or painful experiences of the soul—are expressions for the imagination and the internal and external senses, is a point Sadra makes more openly and extensively in his separate chapter "On the Gates of Heaven and Hell" in the *Asfār*, IX, 330-338; see also nn. 257 and 260 above.

[264] The "heart" (*al-qalb*), or inner core of noetic awareness in man (cf. the traditions at n. 259 above on its identity with the divine "Throne"), is "closed" to everything but the noetic Paradise because that highest dimension of Being

them and they will not enter Paradise until the camel enters in through the eye of the needle (7:40). For God's Path, as was indicated (in §6 above), is "finer than a hair," so that whoever would traverse It needs the most perfect discrimination and sensitivity. How, then, could stupid and ignorant men easily travel this Path—especially when (their ignorance) is compounded with willfulness and arrogant pride?! Therefore Hell has seven gates, while the gates of Paradise are eight in number.

§12. *Principle, concerning the allusion to the number of "guardian demons"* (96:18)

He—May He be exalted!—said: *Over It there are nineteen. And we have appointed only angels to be masters of Hell. And We have appointed their number only as a trial for those who do not believe, so that those who have been given the Book might have certainty, and those who have true faith might be increased in it . . . , and so that the unbelievers and those in whose hearts there is illness might say: "What does God mean by this image?"* . . . (74:30-31).

Know that it has been revealed to the masters of luminous inner vision that this mortal human heart, with regard to its places of perception, doors, and windows, resembles Hell [277] and Its gates. For it has been revealed by this inner vision that there are nineteen kinds of *guardian demons* (96:18) sitting in front of the doors of this house (of the human body), which is the image of Hell: they are the five external senses, the five internal senses, the powers of appetite and irascibility, and the seven "vegetal" powers (nutrition, reproduction, and so on).[265] Each of these helps pull the Heart

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actually transcends and includes both the relative "Hells" and "Gardens" of psychic experience and the "Gehenna" of physical existence. The Koranic verse (7:40) Sadra quotes here has almost literal parallels in the sayings of Jesus at *Matthew* 19:24 and *Mark* 10:25.

265 Note the qualification of the "heart" at the beginning of this paragraph as "mortal human" (*basharī*: cf. n. 101), as opposed to the "fully human" (*insānī*), noetic "Heart" discussed in §11 (at nn. 259, 264). Sadra is concerned here with a physiological account of man's bodily, animal nature. His description here (abridging the much longer corresponding chapter of the *Asfār*, IX, 372-374) follows the complex system of psychic "faculties" or powers that medieval commentators had developed out of Aristotle's biological works, and that formed part of the accepted scientific physiology of his time. However, the essential

down from the lofty summit of the World of (noetic) Sanctity to the abyss of this lowly (physical) world.

Now as for the explanation of the (noetic) Sources (of these bodily powers) and *those who precede* (79:4) them, (those intelligible Realities have already been discussed).[266] Now you must know that *those who govern matters* in the material forms of this world of shadows[267]—who are what is alluded to in His saying: *By those who go before, preceding. Then those who govern the matter* (79:4-5)—are in the inner reality behind the material macrocosm (that is, the physical universe), among the angelic spirits of the seven planets and the twelve constellations of the zodiac. Their total number is nineteen, whether secretly and in the Unseen world (that is, referring to the celestial intelligences themselves) or openly and visibly (that is, in association with the heavenly bodies they control).[268]

Similarly in the human microcosm, these (directing forces) are the governors of the powers most immediately controlling these lower material forms. They are the *nineteen* (guardian demons) already mentioned: the seven which are the causes of the body's vegetal activities, and the twelve others (that is, the five internal and five external senses, appetite, and irascibility) which are the causes of its animal activities.

Therefore, so long as man's being is confined to these internal

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philosophic point here is not the specific number of such powers, but the underlying insight that it is the soul's orientation to the survival of the particular physical organism—as manifested in all psychic activities, not merely the basic biological functions—that tends to turn its activities and perceptions into oppressive, "hellish" ones. This inner attachment is the ground of the inner relation between the psychic "Hells" and the "Gehenna" of man's physical being; cf. n. 205 and all of §10.

266 The parenthetical explanations in this section are based on the longer version of this chapter in the *Asfār*, IX, 373-374.

267 "Material forms" here translates *barāzikh*, plural of *barzakh*. This meaning of *barzakh* (as opposed to Sadra's more common usage referring to the domain of the soul, which is borrowed from Ibn Arabi), is taken over from Suhrawardi. In his philosophy, it refers to all the determinate forms (in this instance, material ones) that at once screen out and manifest the "Light" of noetic Being.

268 Up to this point, this paragraph is another allusion to the prevailing cosmological assumption of the complete governance and determination of the (sublunar) physical cosmos through the mediated influences of the heavenly bodies and their souls and immaterial intellects: cf. the similar references at nn. 59 and 218 above.

and external prisons, locked up in the dungeon of physical nature, and held captive at the hands of these general and particular laborers (of the bodily activities), he will never be able to ascend to the world of the (noetic) Gardens, the Fountainhead of divine Delight, and the Abode of eternal Life.[269] And if he does not free himself from their shackles and influences, they will continue to occupy and overwhelm him, as is plainly shown by His saying—May He be exalted!—*Take him and bind him, all of you! Then roast him in Hellfire!* . . . (69:30-31). For when he is taken away from this body by death, he will only be transported from this prison to the *Great Prison* (83:7-8), where the Ruler will hand him over to those *guardian demons* (96:18) who are among the effects of those (bodily powers) *who govern* (79:5). Then he is tormented and punished by them in the other world, just as he is tormented by them in this world, although he may not notice this (yet) because of the thickness and coarseness of the veils (concealing this condition from his awareness). But when the veil becomes transparent and this *dark covering is taken away* (50:22), then he will see himself being tormented at the hands of the keepers of the Hellfire and the *guardian demons* (96:18) of Hell's boiling cauldrons, who are all dragging him down into the Gehenna (of purely bodily existence) with their chains and fetters.

§13. *Principle, concerning* al-A'rāf *and Its people*

He—May He be exalted!—said: *And on al-A'rāf are men who know each of them* [that is, the people of Paradise and Hell] *by their marks* (7:46).[270]

Now it has been said that *al-A'raf* is a wall between Paradise and

[269] The "ascent" in question here is of course not a matter of physically or psychically "leaving" the body or physical cosmos, but rather of directly experiencing the actual noetic transcendence of the Self with respect to both the material and psychic modalities of being.

[270] Sadra discusses the classical commentaries on this Koranic passage at much greater length in the corresponding chapter of the *Asfār* (IX, 316-318). Although he admits that the most frequent interpretation is that outlined in the second paragraph here, it should be noted that his own derivation of the meaning of *al-A'rāf* from *ma'rifa* also had its early defenders and is reflected in a number of traditions of the Shiite Imams, only one of which is briefly mentioned here (at n. 273).

Hell, *on whose inner side*—which is the one next to Paradise—*is Mercy, while its outer side is toward the torment* (57:13) of Hell, which adjoins it on that side. On it (according to this interpretation) are those whose good and evil acts exactly balanced out in the scales (of the Judgment), [279] so that they are looking toward Hell with one eye and toward Paradise with the other. But there is no preponderance of their deeds in either direction, such as would incline God—May He be exalted!—to make them enter one of those two Abodes. This is what was said.

But my own view is that *al-A'rāf* is something other than the wall lying between Paradise and Hell. What those (commentators) have mentioned concerning that wall is only valid and appropriate in explaining His saying: *Then they will be separated by a wall having a door on whose inner side is Mercy, while its outer side is toward the Torment* (57:13).

As for (the term) "*al-A'rāf*," its root meaning is either derived from "true inner knowing" (*al-'irfān*), which accords with His saying—May He be exalted!— (concerning the people of *al-A'rāf*): . . . *who know [ya'rifūn] each of them by their marks* (7:46). Or else it is derived from the the horse's mane (*al-'urf*), that is, the hair "high up" on its neck, and from *al-'urfa*, which is a "high" hill of sand—in which case *al-A'rāf* is an allusion to the loftiness of their position and the sublimity and exaltedness of their essences. The people of *al-A'rāf*, then, are those who have become perfect in knowledge and true inner understanding, *who know each* group among mankind *by their marks*. For with the light of their inner vision and discernment they see the people of Paradise and Hell, as well as their states in the other world. As the Prophet said: "Beware the perspicacity of the man of true faith, for he beholds things with the Light of God."[271]

Yet at the same time the people of *al-A'rāf* are to be considered in this world with regard to their bodies, as has been said:[272]

271 For this famous Prophetic tradition, see the references in Furūzānfar, *Aḥādīth-i Mathnawī*, p. 14. "Perspicacity" is an incomplete translation of *al-firāsa*, the art of discerning a person's inner spiritual states from his physiognomy or the slight outward "signs" (*sīmā'*) mentioned in this verse (7:46).

272 This quotation is apparently not given in the corresponding chapter of the *Asfār* or Sadra's other major systematic works. However, the language and

Their bodies are in this lowest world, but their hearts are suspended like lamps from *the Loftiest Assembly* (37:8; 38:69). In their bodies they are earthly, but in their hearts they are heavenly; their figures belong to [God's] Carpet [of corporeal being], while their spirits are of the Throne. Although they have entered Paradise in spirit, they have not yet died physically so that they might enter It with their bodies, as He—May He be exalted!—said: *They have not entered it, and yet they are hoping* (7:46), in anticipation of God's Mercy.

When they do leave this world, their "hoping" (in the Paradise of the soul) is the same as the immediate attainment (of their desire), and their power is the same as its actualization and occurrence. Before that, however, their condition is the perfection appropriate to their intermediate mode of being between the conditions of the people of Paradise and those of Hell. For their hearts are blessed with all the delights of inner knowledge and true faith belonging to the Gardens (of Paradise); but their bodies are still tormented by all the sufferings and cares of this world, as He—May He be exalted!—said: *But when their eyes are turned toward the people of Hell, they say: "Our Lord, do not put us among the people who do wrong!"* (7:47).

Now there are several things that indicate the correctness of the interpretation we have mentioned here. The first of these is what has been related from our Imams, that they said:[273] "*We* are *al-A'rāf.*" The second reason is that this verse (7:46) seems to indicate the highest degree of praise (for the people of *al-A'rāf*), whereas there is nothing at this point deserving of praise in those of middle rank who are stopped at that *wall* (57:13) between the abodes of Paradise and Hell because their scales are evenly balanced. Nor

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content are again characteristic of Ibn Arabi, whom Sadra often does quote without explicit indication of his source.

[273] In the *Asfār* (IX, 318), Sadra gives a much longer version of this tradition, which is the Imam Ja'far's account of Ali's reply to a question concerning the meaning of *al-A'rāf* in this Koranic verse (7:46): "We *are on al-A'rāf* and we *know* [*na'rifu*] our supporters *by their signs.* Indeed we *are al-A'rāf,* so that there is no way to know God except by true inner knowledge [*ma'rifa*] of us: no one will enter Paradise but those whom we have acknowledged [or "caused to know": *'arrafnāhu*]; nor will anyone enter Hell but those whom we have denied."

would (people of such a mean rank) possess true inner knowledge to such a degree that they would *know each one* of the two groups (in Paradise and Hell) *by their signs* (7:46), since the true inner knowledge of souls is a great and prodigious matter. Finally, the place for prayer and supplication [279] for the requesting of needs (such as attested concerning the people of *al-A'rāf* at 7:47) is only in this world and before death. As for the other world and what comes after death, There is the *promised time* (3:9) for ecstasy and reunion (with God), or for the attainment of despair and exclusion (from His Presence).

§14. *Principle, on the inner meaning of* Ṭūbā

[*Those who have true faith and do good, for them is Blessedness* (Ṭūbā) *and a beautiful Return* (13:29).] *Ṭūbā*[274] is an image of the Tree of Knowledge, with its many limbs and branches and the divine insights and inner truths that are its noble fruits and products —and that cannot be acquired by our mere mortal intellects alone. Rather, in order actually to attain and comprehend these divine insights and inner truths, it is necessary to take over Lights from the Lamp-niche of the Seal of Prophecy (that is, the noetic "Reality of Muhammad"), through the intermediary of the first of his Heirs (the Imam Ali), the noblest of his Friends and Disciples, and the most eminent of the Gates to the City of his knowledge.[275] For it is

[274] The word *Ṭūbā*, in its root sense, means ultimate joy, bliss, blessedness, and the like. However, it was traditionally taken to refer to a "tree" in Paradise, although that notion is not explicit in the Koran itself (13:29). Sadra's discussion of this symbol of the "Tree of Knowledge" in the penultimate chapter of the *Asfār* (IX, 377-380) lacks the exclusive emphasis on its specifically Shiite manifestations that is so marked here. In the *Asfār*, the Shiite traditions are preceded by a much longer summary of Sadra's philosophic conception of inner metaphysical knowledge (*ma'rifa*) and perception, corresponding roughly to Parts I and II-A in this book. Cf. the Introduction, III-A, IV-C, and VI-B for some of the motivations for the emphasis on Shiite symbolism in the *'Arshīya*.

[275] "Mere mortal intellects" translates *'uqūl basharīya*: cf. n. 265 (for a similar qualification of *qalb*, which is the same as *'aql* in this context) and earlier references to the basic contrast of *bashar* and *insān*, the "fully human" aspect of man. For the "Light" of noetic Being and the "Lamp-niche of Prophecy," see the references in the Prologue (n. 6) and in many other passages above. The expressions "Heirs" (or "Executors"—*awṣiyā'*, sing. *waṣī*: cf. n. 233), "Friends and Disciples" (*awliyā'*, sing. *walī*: cf. n. 6), and "Gates" (or "Doors"—*abwāb*, sing.

only through the seeds of Sainthood and Discipleship and the tree of Right Guidance that these divine sciences and spiritual insights can unfold and expand in the hearts of those who are prepared and ready to receive their Guidance.[276]

Among the reports supporting this interpretation is the following one related by the most accurate, reliable, exact and discerning of traditionists, the Shaykh al-Ṣadūq Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn 'Alī al-Ḥusayn ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī, on a sound line of authority going back to Abū Baṣīr: "[The Imam] Abū 'Abdallāh Ja'far al-Ṣādiq—May peace be with him!—said: '*Ṭūbā* is a tree in Paradise. Its roots are in the House of [the first Imam] 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib—May peace be with him!—and one of its branches is in the abode of every man of true faith.' " That is because Ali's most noble soul is a source of all virtues and knowledge, and his luminous heart is the key to the doors of the treasuries of divine inner knowledge handed down from the prophets, and especially from the last and wisest of them (Muhammad)—May the best and highest of blessings be upon him and his Family!—as is clearly expressed in his saying: "I am the City of Knowledge, and Ali is its Gate."[277]

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bāb) are all used here as technical terms of Shiite imamology, referring to the unique status of the Imams conceived as the inheritors, guardians, and initiatory vehicles of the spiritual wisdom of the Prophet. For the famous tradition naming Ali as "Gate" to the "City" of Muhammad's knowledge, see n. 277 below.

[276] The numerous Koranic allusions to *al-hidāya* or *al-hudā* ("guidance" or "right direction") were understood in Shiite theology as technical references to the special function of the Imam, considered as *al-hādī* ("the Guide," par excellence), as in the tradition Sadra quotes at n. 278 below. That function was understood to include the teaching of the inner, esoteric meaning of revelation, as well as the essential details of the external religious Law promulgated by the prophetic "Messenger" (*al-rasūl*). The contrast of these two functions is essentially that of the "Prophet" (*al-nabī*) and his "Executor" or "Trustee" (*al-waṣī*) discussed in n. 233 above. The term *al-walāya* (referring to the special condition of the *walī*: cf. n. 6 and other references above) had a similar technical meaning in Shiite theology. However, in Sufism—and particularly for Ibn Arabi—it was applied to the spiritual state of the enlightened "knower," who was the true "friend of God" (*walī Allāh*); in that broader usage it has commonly been translated, albeit misleadingly, as "saint." Since for Sadra the underlying meaning is the same in both cases—that is, as referring to the ontological condition of the realized human being—*al-walāya* has been translated here (and at n. 309 below) as "Discipleship and Sainthood," so as to retain this basic ambiguity.

[277] For other allusions to this famous Shiite tradition in this work, see the Prologue (n. 4) and the Concluding Testament (at n. 314).

Now the only reason that the meaning of *Ṭūbā* (in the tradition just cited) was specifically ascribed to the Abode of Ali's inner spiritual heart in the other world, rather than to the Abode of Muhammad—May God's blessing and peace be with him!—was because it is only through Ali's teaching and explanation that one can acquire the particular details and specifics of those true forms of knowledge which the Messenger and the Book brought as a general totality. This (complementary role of Ali and the Imamate in relation to the Prophet) was alluded to by Him—May He be exalted!—in His saying: [*Say: "God and*] *he who has knowledge of the Book* [*is sufficient as a witness between me and you*]" (13:43); and His saying: *Certainly he is with Us, in the Mother of the Book, sublime* ('alī), *truly wise* (43:4) and His saying: *So ask the people of Remembrance, if you do not know* (16:43); and His saying: *You* [Muhammad] *are only a Warner; and for every people there is a Guide* (13:7). And because of that it is reported that (Muhammad)—May God's blessing and peace be with him!—said: "Since this verse [13:7] was revealed, O Ali, I am the Warner, and you are the Guide!"[278]

So it should be clear, by the Light of the intellect and tradition alike, that the image of the tree *Ṭūbā*—by which I mean the Source of all knowledge and true inner understanding—is indeed in the Abode of Ali and his immaculate offspring (the other Imams), who are *descendants one of another* (3:34), since each of them follows in the footsteps of his sanctified father and his [280] immaculate, luminous forefather. And the branches of *Ṭūbā* are in the "dwellings" of the breasts of their partisans and the "homes" of the hearts of their adherents, because out of their knowledge of the Prophet and his trusted Heir—May peace be with them both!—grow the ramifications and divisions of the rational sciences and the branches of legal understanding in the hearts of the learned men and legal ex-

278 These Koranic verses were among the classic Shiite justifications for the special functions attributed to the Imamate of Ali and his descendants: cf. nn. 275 and 276. At the same time, it should be clear by now that Sadra's understanding of the reality of the Imams (or the "imams" in each religious community) as exemplars of noetic realization considerably transcends the usual bounds of Sunnite-Shiite polemics or, for that matter, of "Islam" as a specific historical form.

perts who are their followers and the supporters of their tradition until the Day of the Rising. Thus the relation of the Master of the Disciples (that is, the Imam Ali)—May peace be with him!—to the learned men of this religious community, with regard to his inner spiritual fatherhood, is like the relation of Adam—Upon whom be peace!—to individual mortal men, with regard to the paternity of their outer form. This is why the Prophet—May God's blessing and peace be with him!—said: "O Ali! You and I are the two fathers of this community."[279]

The relation of the tree *Ṭūbā* to all of the trees of Paradise is also like this. The true knower and realized seeker (Ibn Arabi) said in *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīya* ("The Meccan Inspirations"):

> Know that the relation of the tree *Ṭūbā* to all of the trees of Paradise is like that of Adam to the offspring who appeared from him. For when God had planted *Ṭūbā* and properly formed It with His Hand, then He breathed into It from His Spirit. In the same way, He exalted Adam [above all the angels, by forming him] *with both of His Hands* (38:75), and then *breathed into him* [His Spirit], so that Adam received as a legacy the inspiration of the Spirit. And he has *the knowledge of the Names* (2:35), because of his having been created *with both of His Hands*.[280] Now when the

[279] This section summarizes the decisive political role (in the broadest, classical sense) of the "prophets" or religious lawgivers and founders and their successors (the "imams") in shaping the different cultural communities within which man's being is manifested: cf. the related text at n. 301 below. It indicates the level of understanding uniting the various forms and levels of intention of Sadra's writing: cf. the explanations in the Introduction, III-A and E, IV-C, and VI.

In that context, this description of the role of the learned religious scholars (*'ulamā'*: cf. n. 316 below) and expert jurists (*mujtahidūn*) who were supposed to guide the mass of their uneducated followers (the *muqallidūn*) is quite ambiguous, as is the expression "until the Day of the Rising!" All of Sadra's works are directed toward a deeper questioning of the most basic popular assumptions as to what it means to "know" the Imams or to realize the intentions of the Prophetic Lawgiver. The tone of his Prologue and Concluding Testament to this work suggests something of the distance between the prevailing popular understanding of these questions and his own conceptions—and his vision of what it would mean if the *'ulamā'*, the "learned" guides of the community, were also actual *'urafā'*, truly "knowers."

[280] "Adam," in this passage from Ibn Arabi, is typically understood as the spiritual or noetic reality of Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*: cf. §11 above), and hence actually synonymous with *Ṭūbā*. The allusion is not at all to the physical or

Truly Real had taken care of planting the tree *Ṭūbā* and breathing into It, then He adorned It with fruits that are beautiful ornaments and fine raiment glorifying whoever may wear them. And *we* are Its "earth" [in which *Ṭūbā* and Its fruits grow and flower]—just as He *made everything that is on the earth an adornment for it* (18:7).

It should be evident from his words that the blessed tree *Ṭūbā* refers to the Sources of true inner knowledge and of virtuous traits of character, which are an "adornment" to the souls receiving them, just as *what is on earth is an adornment for it* (18:7).

§15. *Principle, concerning the "abiding" in Hell of Its people*[281]

This is an extremely difficult question, one that has been the subject of dispute between those learned in the external forms (of the Law

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mortal bodily man (*bashar*), as it was in Sadra's own mention of "Adam" in the preceding paragraph. In another context (*Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, pp. 55, 144-145), Ibn Arabi explains that the "creation with both Hands" refers to man's unique "comprehensiveness" (*jam'īya*), that is, to the fact that he alone among the creatures is a true microcosm (cf. §11, n. 256) encompassing all the modes of being, both spiritual and earthly or elemental. The Koranic background of this interpretation (as at n. 44 above) is the story of Satan's refusal to bow down to Adam because he was created of "clay" instead of the angelic element of pure "fire."

281 The real subject of this chapter has little to do with the popular understanding of the controversy concerning the "eternity" of "Hell," as that is outlined in the first paragraph. Sadra uses that dispute to take up the classic philosophic question of divine "providence" (*al-'ināya*: the Greek *prōnoia*: cf. I, §12) or theodicy: what wisdom and justice is manifested in the existence of the body and the material world, with all the suffering and evils ("Hell," in eschatological language) to which they give rise?

Sadra's reply takes place in two stages. (The whole argument is much more clearly drawn in the corresponding chapter of the *Asfār*, IX, 346-362; the text here corresponds to only two pages of that chapter.) The first, more traditional philosophic response is to emphasize the necessary role of the physical world in the larger context of the individual soul's process of gradual realization and perfection—that is, in the economy of the cosmic "Return" (e.g., at nn. 282, 285). That argument is appropriate to the experience of all readers, and retains the attitude of implicit inner opposition to the nature of things that ordinarily follows from the identification of self and physical body, which is more or less assumed in that perspective.

The second response, expressed in the enigmatic words of Ibn Arabi (at nn. 283, 287-289), is that of the enlightened "knower" who actually experiences the

and religious tradition) and those whose knowing is based on experiential "unveiling"—and even among the people of unveiling themselves. (The question is) whether the torment of those in Hell goes on forever and without end, or whether instead they will have a certain rest and felicity there in Gehenna which is their abode of misery, when the period of their torment comes *to its appointed end* (6:2; etc.). Of course, everyone is agreed that the unbelievers do not leave Hell, but rather *are remaining there* (43:77) for an endless time. For both abodes (of Hell and Paradise) have their inhabitants; indeed, both are *filled up* (7:18; 11:20) with them.

Now there are fundamental philosophic principles indicating that every existent thing has an inherent end toward which it moves, that the bodily powers (which are the sources of "Gehenna" for each man) are in fact limited, and that their constraint (against this inherent movement toward perfection) of a natural being does not last forever. So in the end, everything does eventually come back to the divine *Mercy* which *embraces all things* (7:156).[282]

But we also have fundamental principles indicating that the torments and sufferings of Gehenna do continue forever for Its inhabitants, just as [281] the felicities and blessings of Paradise last forever for Its people. However, the "perpetuity" appropriate to these two domains has quite a different meaning in either case. . . . (That is, the sufferings of the "Gehenna" of material being are an unavoidable aspect of the existence of individual men and other natural beings, but are perpetuated on that plane of being through successive members of the human *species,* while the timeless blessings of the Paradise of noetic being are attainable only by human

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universal Paradise of noetic Being (§11 above), in that he has realized the inner identity of the soul as the transcendent Source of all manifestations—and at the same time, is able to see through the relativity of evaluations based on the vagaries of bodily nature and particular psychic predispositions. Sadra does not belabor this point here: that condition of nonduality is a rare state of grace, and attempts to conceive it in terms of the categories of unenlightened experience—as Ibn Arabi's critics were quick to recognize—can only lead to the dangerous confusions of quietism and antinomianism.

282 "Mercy" here is again the comprehensive Whole or Being (*wujūd*). More specifically, the reference here is to the cosmic "Return" (*al-ma'ād*: the title of all of Part II) as it is manifested in the progression of individuals toward their fully human noetic perfection (*kamāl*).

individuals, through "death" to the body and to the illusion of identity with it.)[283]

Moreover, you know that the order and arrangement of this world could not function properly without crude and rough souls, and extremely hard and cruel hearts. For if all of mankind were of the same (lofty) rank and flawless nature, with obedient and god-fearing hearts, then the proper ordering (of this social world) would be upset. Because the cultivation and civilization of this (earthly) abode cannot be maintained without severe, rough souls like those of Pharaohs and Antichrists, and cunning, Satanic souls. (As God said), according to one tradition: "Indeed I made Adam's disobedience the cause of the cultivation and civilization of this world." And He—May He be exalted!—said: *Already We have carried off to Gehenna a great many of the jinn and of mankind, who had hearts with which they did not understand, eyes with which they did not see, and ears with which they paid no heed: these are like cattle—or rather, they are even more astray! They are the heedless ones* (7:179). Likewise, He said: *If We had wished, We could have brought each soul its right Guidance. But My Saying has been realized: "Surely I will fill Gehenna with jinn and men altogether!"* (32:13).[284]

283 The explanation given in parentheses here, which indicates the essential agreement between Sadra's philosophic position and the popularly suspect views of Ibn Arabi, is based on the following summary passage from the corresponding chapter of the *Asfār* (IX, 350):

> We do not agree that there is any contradiction [between our views and those of Ibn Arabi on this question], since there is no contradiction between the continuation forever and without ceasing of the torment of those in Hell [that is, of the human and other sentient species, as their members are successively manifested in the physical world] and the ceasing of that torment for every single *individual* among them at a definite time [that is, with the "death" of spiritual rebirth in the noetic Paradise].

Sadra's suppression here in the *'Arshīya* of all but the faintest allusion to his agreement with Ibn Arabi is in keeping with one level of intention in this work: cf. the explanations in the Introduction, III-E and IV-C.

284 This paragraph indicates some of the political insights motivating Sadra's constant awareness of the necessity for different levels of writing, teaching, and interpretation of the Law, to accord with the real differences in human needs and capacities: cf. the Introduction, II, III-E, IV-C, VI-B. In particular, it rather pointedly rules out the extreme tendencies of a quietistic or antinomian rejection of the communal world, or a radical perfectionist attempt at its utopian trans-

(This is because if) all souls were of a single rank, that would contradict (divine) wisdom and the general well-being, since it would mean leaving out all the other possible ranks (of beings) in the state of contingency, so that they would never emerge from potentiality into actuality—but that is contrary to (the divine wisdom and) providential ordering of things! Rather, every group (of natural beings) has by essence certain natural ends and proper places; these essential ends of things are what are fitting and appropriate for them and correspond to their essences. And since the being of each group is required by God's Decree and specific Determination, by His providential Ordering and Mercy, in the end of the matter all things must arrive at their (natural and essential ends).[285] (This is true) even if something should hinder them from reaching those ends for a longer or shorter period of time, as He said: [*They aim at the Unseen from a place far away.*] *And something is set between them and what they desire* (34:54).

For God is manifesting Himself through all of the Names, and in all of the stations and levels of Their descent. He is the "Merciful," the "Compassionate," and the "Benevolent." And He is the "Almighty," the "Compelling," the "Overwhelming," and the

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formation. One of the central aims of Sadra's writing is to combat those illusions based on "gnostic" misunderstandings of the true nature and context of enlightenment.

More positively—although open admission of this aspect here would not accord with the esoteric focus on the symbolism of "Hell"—Sadra's remarks point to the necessary positive role of material existence in purifying the soul and actualizing the infinite facets of the divine Nature (cf. n. 286); cf. also §11 above on the relativity of "Heaven" and "Hell" at this level of awareness.

285 "Most of the theological language in this paragraph has specific technical meanings in Sadra's philosophy (or in the writings of Ibn Arabi, from which most of it is adopted). The divine "Decree" (*qaḍā'*) refers to the intelligible order of Being, prior to Its "particular determination" (*qadar*) in the manifest, transient forms of psychic and material existence; cf. n. 220 above. "Mercy" (*al-raḥma*) is again the whole cosmic process of the Self-manifestation of Being; and the "providential Ordering" or "caring" (*'ināya*) refers to the ordering of all things according to the intelligible pattern of the divine Wisdom (*al-ḥikma*) and the noetic "Decree." Note that this paragraph clearly indicates the positive function and necessity of material being in the cosmic economy of the "Return" —and that Sadra accordingly drops his earlier exclusive emphasis on the "hellish" aspect of physical being, as he moves toward the more comprehensive perspective of the "true knower" (n. 286).

"Avenging."[286] And (this meaning is) also in the tradition: "If you people were not already sinning, God would have done away with you and brought in your stead another nation that was sinning."

One of the "unveilers" (that is, Ibn Arabi) has said:[287]

> God causes the people [of Paradise and of Hell] to enter into those Abodes, the blessed according to His Grace, and the people of Hell according to His Justice. They settle down there through their actions, and they abide there through their intentions. Now [those in Hell] receive the pains of their punishment in proportion to the period during which they treated other things as God in this world. But when the period of their punishment is through, then they are given comfort in that Abode and they [continue] abiding there. Because if they were to enter Paradise, they would suffer painfully There, since it would not agree with their intrinsic nature and predisposition. For they actually take pleasure in what they have of the fires, bitter cold, stinging snakes and scorpions, and all else that Hell contains, just as the people of Paradise take pleasure There in Its Light and Its Pavilions, and in kissing Its beautiful luminous beings, because their natures require that.
>
> Don't you see that there are people whose natures are such that they are actually hurt by the perfume of roses, while they take pleasure in putrid things? Or that people with a naturally hot

[286] This paragraph alludes to the knower's perception of the world (systematically expounded by the followers of Ibn Arabi) as an infinite play of divine Self-manifestation (*maẓāhir*: cf. 10-12 above) in the different modalities of being and consciousness. Sadra's own ontology (as summarized in Part I) is a restatement and clarification of the same distinctive realization. As indicated here, the noetic Forms and Realities or divine "Names" of Beauty (*jamāl*) and terrifying Majesty (*jalāl*) may appear in our ordinary experience as either paradisiac or hellish (cf. also §§10-11); but from the transcendent perspective of the "true knower" they are all inherent and equally essential aspects of Being or the "Truly Real" (*al-ḥaqq*).

[287] The text here has only *ba'ḍ al-mukāshifīn* (from the key term *kashf*, "unveiling") with no explicit mention of author or source. The corresponding chapter of the *Asfār* does identify this quotation from Ibn Arabi's *Futūḥāt*, along with a great many other passages from Ibn Arabi and his commentator al-Qayṣarī. In fact, the general philosophic remarks that take up most of this Principle make up only a few pages of the corresponding section of the *Asfār* (IX, 346-362).

disposition find the odor of musk offensive? Thus pleasures [282] follow from harmony and agreement [with the natural disposition], while pains come from the lack of such agreement.[288]

The author of *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīya* (Ibn Arabi) examined this topic assiduously and went to the utmost lengths in discussing it in that book. And in the *Fuṣūṣ* (*al-Ḥikam*, "The Bezels of Wisdom") he said: "As for the people of Hell, in the end they eventually attain a comfort. For after the ending of their period of punishment, the form of Hellfire must become cool and safe for those who are in It."[289]

Now as for myself and what I have learned from the studies and practical (spiritual) exercises to which I have devoted myself, it would appear that Hell (that is, the "Gehenna" of bodily existence) is not an abode of comfort. Rather, It is only a place of pain, suffering, and endless torment; its pains are continuous and constantly renewed, without ceasing (since in the realm of physical being) [*as often as their skins are well cooked*] *they are given new skins in exchange* (4:56). So that is no place for rest and true tranquillity,

[288] This passage, a typically ambiguous example of Ibn Arabi's writing, is virtually incomprehensible out of context and without some commentary. In the larger context of this book (cf. especially §§10-11 above), it seems that "Hell" here refers to painful psychic experience that takes place in inner ignorance of the noetic "Paradise" (not the relative psychic one mentioned in this quotation) realized by the enlightened knower. The basic point in the concluding sentences about the arbitrary and relative character of our usual judgment of experiences as either painful or pleasurable (that is, as belonging to the psychic "Heaven" or "Hell") is one Ibn Arabi frequently makes in his writings, including the passage from the *Fuṣūṣ* that Sadra goes on to quote here (n. 289).

[289] This quotation from the *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, p. 169, is deliberately taken out of context here, so as to highlight what literal-minded readers had seen as Ibn Arabi's heretical opinion about an "end" to Hell—and thereby to place Sadra himself apparently in righteous opposition to that dangerous point of view (cf. nn. 283 and 290).

The original context of this passage, as with the immediately preceding quotation from the *Futūḥāt* (n. 288), is an explanation of the ultimate relativity of our ordinary perception of our experience as either positive or negative, "hellish" or "paradisiac," when those phenomena are experience by the enlightened knower in their true nature as theophanies, *tajalliyāt*. Ibn Arabi illustrates his point here in the *Fuṣūṣ* by mentioning a story about the prophet Abraham (*al-Khalīl*), who was thrown into a fire (or "Hell"; the Arabic *al-nār* has both meanings), but experienced it as being "cool," by God's grace—that is, in light of his inner awareness of its noetic Ground and true nature.

because Its position in the other world is like the position of the world of generation and corruption in this world.[290]

§16. *Principle, concerning the manner of the embodiment of actions and intentions on the Day of the Rising, and the allusion to their matter and form*

Know that every external form also has a distinctive manifestation in the place proper to the soul. And every form in the soul and every deep-seated habitual disposition also has being in the external (physical world).

For example, do you not see how the form of a wet body can have an effect on the material of another (dry) body capable of receiving wetness, so that the second body becomes wet like the first and can easily receive different shapes? But if this (same) wet body makes an impression on another (noncorporeal) matter, like that of the powers of the senses or the imagination, their matter is also affected by the wetness. But it does not actually receive this influence and become damp like the wet object, although it does receive the quiddity of wetness—only through another form and another image. Similarly, the human power of intellection receives (still) another form of it, in another mode of being and manifestation, although the quiddity of wetness is one and the same. The single quiddity, therefore, has three different forms in the three realms (of corporeal, psychic, and noetic being), each of them having its own distinctive being and particular determinate manifestation.

Now considering this difference in the status of the three modalities of being with regard to a single quiddity, extend that distinction to the modes of manifestation and being of every other particular quiddity and essential meaning. Then you will not be surprised if anger, which is a quality of the soul, might become a raging fire, if it should come to exist in the external (world). Or that if knowl-

290 In fact "Gehenna," in Sadra's (and Ibn Arabi's) technical usage, *is* the material world of generation and corruption—and by extension, the restless, often painful psychic forms of experience that follow from the soul's confusion of its "self" or true being with the fortunes of a particular body. For the intentionally concealed reconciliation of Sadra's and Ibn Arabi's positions here, see nn. 281 and 283 above.

edge, which is also a quality of soul, were to come to exist externally, it would be *a spring* [in Paradise] *called Salsabīl* (76:18). Or that *those who wrongfully consume the property of orphans* might be transformed in the realm of the other world *into stomachs* [283] eating *a fire that burns them up* (4:10) on the Day of Judgment. Nor (would you be surprised to see) that love of this world—that is, the carnal desires that here are characteristics of the soul—might become serpents and scorpions biting and stinging their possessor on the Day of the Rising. This amount (of illustration) should be sufficient for the discerning man to have true faith in everything that the Lawgiver has promised him or warned him against (in the other world).

Everyone with a capacity for intuitively grasping knowledge ought to consider attentively the attributes of the soul and the way they give rise to external effects and activities. Then he should use this as a means to true inner knowledge of the way certain habits and traits of character necessarily entail specific effects in the Rising. For example, intense anger in a man will give rise to the excitation of his blood, a reddening of his face, and the swelling of his skin. The anger is a psychic state existing in the world of his inner being, while these effects are attributes of corporeal bodies which came about as results of his anger in this (corporeal) modality of being. So it should not be surprising if, in another (that is, psychic) modality of being, anger were to be transformed into a pure fire that sets the heart ablaze, *tears apart their entrails* (47:15), and *towers flaming above their hearts* (104:6-7)—just as in this world, when it becomes very intense, it causes the body to heat up, the veins to throb, the limbs to tremble, and inflames the humors and material constituents (of the body). And sometimes anger may even lead to a severe illness, or indeed to dying from apopleptic rage. All of the bodily forms existing in the other world are just like this, whether they arise from sound and unsound beliefs and intentions, or from good and evil habits and traits of character in souls which have taken root in them through the repetition of (certain) actions and activities in this world. Thus actions become the causes of states of character in this world; but souls, by taking on the structure and form (of these habits), become the causes of (psychic) bodies in the other world.

As for the matter from which the (psychic) bodies are generated and in which the actions are embodied and the intentions and represented in the other world, it is nothing but the human soul. Just as in this world prime matter is the material out of which all bodies and extended forms are generated—although in itself prime matter has no extension—so likewise, the human soul is the material from which are generated all the things existing in determinate representations in the other world, although in its essence the soul is a spiritual thing without any extension.[291]

However, the difference between prime matter and the soul involves several points:

a. The first of these is that the being of prime matter is something purely potential in every respect, since it does not actually occur at all by itself, but only through the bodily forms (of the elements and more complex material entities). This is unlike the soul, which exists in actuality by its very essence, as a substantial, intrinsically sensitive being. At first, the soul is the form of this [284] elemental human body; then it becomes the matter in the other world for a form in the other world, and is united with that form through a kind of union. So the soul is the form of material things (that is, the body) in this world, and it is the material for the forms in the

[291] The basic distinctions recalled here were discussed at greater length in II-B, §§1-2 above. Again, it should be stressed that the language of "forms" and "representations" applied to the soul here by no means implies that what Sadra understands by psychic reality is limited to "images," visual or otherwise, of physical entities.

"Prime matter" (*al-hayūlā*, from the Greek *hylē*), here and in medieval Aristotelean philosophy in general, refers to the ultimate substratum of materiality underlying the four traditional primary elements that together were assumed to make up all the generated beings of the physical world. The reality of "prime matter" was postulated hypothetically, as the necessary substratum of observable material transformations, even though it could not, in principle, be perceived in itself, but only in the forms of the elements and their complex combinations. *Mādda*, translated here as "material," often refers simply to the elements of corporeal being, and in those cases is close in meaning to *jism*, "body." Here, however, and in similar contexts, Sadra uses *mādda* as a more general term, referring to the ultimate substrate of all determinate realization, whether in the physical world, on the plane of the soul—where soul itself is termed a "spiritual matter" (*mādda rūḥānīya*: cf. n. 103) for all psychic phenomena—or even within the divine Intellect, where Absolute Being is a sort of "intelligible matter" for Its own nascent Self-manifestation in the archetypal Forms.

other world. (Those are) the "forms" into which, with God's permission, (the Spirit of Life) is blown *on that Day when it is blown in the forms; then you will come forward in groups* (78:18)—because of the different types (of men's intentions and habitual states) in the other world, as has already been mentioned.[292]

b. Another (aspect of this difference) is that the soul is a subtle, spiritual matter that can only receive the subtle forms of the Unseen —forms that cannot be perceived with these (external) senses, but only with the senses belonging to the other world. Prime matter, on the other hand, is a dense, thick material that can only receive heavy, thick forms restricted by spatial dimensions and locations and mixed with privations and (restricted, particular) potentialities.

c. Another (difference) is that prime matter receives its forms and generated states in a passive manner, by way of continual changes, motions, and transformations (occurring to it). But the soul "receives" its forms, which are already deeply rooted in it, by recalling them and summoning them forth (out of itself).[293] Now there is no inconsistency between the soul's "receiving" these forms and its actualizing them, since at once and in a unified manner it both actualizes and receives the forms and images (in its modality of being). And all knowledge of the (noetic, intelligible) First Principles and Their attributes, inasmuch as it is in this unified manner, occurs both *in* the soul and *by means of* its activity, since the soul's "receptivity" here does not have the meaning of a potential preparedness and possibility (of receiving only one specific form,

[292] The reference is apparently to II-A, §10 above, where the "groups" of men are distinguished according to their predominant psychic state, such as viciousness, irascibility, ignorance, and wisdom. For the "blowing" of life or Being into the forms of determinate existence, see §3 above. Sadra's reading here of "forms" (*al-ṣuwar*, instead of the usual *al-ṣūr*) in this verse (75:18) follows Ibn Arabi's interpretation in that chapter (at n. 177).

[293] The essential "creativity of soul" (*khallāqīyat al-nafs*) in all its acts of perception is one of the most basic principles of Sadra's epistemology (cf. Part I, §10 and all of II-A and II-B above); it is a fundamental point of difference from the philosophy of Avicenna, in which "knowledge" was understood primarily in terms of "abstraction" (*intizā'*) from sense-perception of originally material forms (n. 294 below). The mention of "recalling" forms "deeply rooted" in the soul is an important reminder that for Sadra, given the ontology outlined in Part I (especially §10), all acts of knowledge and perception, including even external sense-perception, are ultimately a sort of "recollection" or *anamnēsis* (cf. n. 248).

which is the case with the receptivity of materials in the external physical world).[294]

d. Finally, these forms (of things in the physical world) are "perfections" of their materials and (elemental) substrates (in the sense of actualizations of a single specific material potentiality). However, the occurrence in the soul of each of those forms that arise from it is not a "perfection" of the soul (in at all the same sense). The only perfection of the soul here is in its perceiving those forms, insofar as *it* makes them and actualizes them. But there is a firm and obvious distinction between these two senses (of "perfection").[295] It has already been shown elsewhere (e.g., at II-B, §1-d and §3-b,c,d) that the aspects of receptivity and activity are really one (in the case of the soul, and that this unity is) among the inherent attributes of its essence.

§17. *Principle, concerning whether or not other animals have a "Gathering" like man's*[296]

We have indicated earlier that every natural substance has its own essential motion, creation and resurrection, and beginning and re-

[294] The term "preparedness" here (supplemented by the explanation in parentheses) translates *isti'dād*, a key concept in Avicenna's version of Aristotelean physics and epistemology. In physics, it referred to the quite specific potential of a particular material substrate that determines its actual reception of only one possible form. Avicenna also applied this model to the soul's acts of understanding as well, maintaining that our "reception" of a particular universal or intelligible quiddity (emanating from the cosmic "Active Intellect": cf. n. 50) is dependent on a similar specific "preparedness" of the "material intellect" (*aql hayūlānī*). And that "preparedness" in turn—in all but the most exceptional cases—was taken to be dependent on a prior effort of "abstraction" from the data of the physical senses. All of Parts II-A and II-B above are directed against this Avicennan epistemology and its ontological underpinnings.

[295] The meaning of "perfection" (*kamāl*) Sadra is attacking as inappropriate here is a technical sense, derived from the Aristotelean "entelechy," in Avicenna's philosophy, where it refers to the actualization of a specific "preparedness" (*isti'dād*), as explained in n. 294. The more common meaning of "perfection" as natural completion, wholeness, and self-sufficiency, as Sadra indicates, would be appropriate to his understanding of soul. The arguments alluded to here, mainly with Avicenna, are discussed at much greater length in the *Asfār*, XIII, summarized in Rahman, *Philosophy*, pp. 195-209.

[296] This concluding chapter condenses a much longer one in the *Asfār* (IX, 243-272), concerning "The Gathering of All Existents to God, Even Minerals and Plants." This chapter actually takes up three distinct topics: first, an allusion

turn (to its noetic Ground). And the philosophers have established that all natural things have (certain) ends by essence, just as they have established that they have (certain) essential beginnings. And every thing returns to That from Which it began. So the bodies return to the (vegetal and animal) powers; those powers return to the soul; the souls return to the (noetic) spirits; and the Whole returns to Him—May He be exalted!—as He said: *Do not all things come back to God?* (42:53), and *All of them are returning to Us* (21:93). Therefore he who knows Whence he comes also knows Where he is going.[297]

But here we are only discussing the resurrection of the particular individual, with the survival of his specific identity and his specific individuality which embraces the two modalities of (physical and psychic) being. Now in the case of man, this ("resurrection" of the individual) is something verified and realized, because of the transcendence of his soul, which is sometimes connected with this material body [285] in this world, and at other times with the formal (psychic) body in the other world. As for the other animals, though, the philosophers and sages have differed concerning the survival of their souls and their "Return" to the other world. The traditions concerning this subject are conflicting, and the Koranic verses referring to it are obscure and quite uncertain (in their meaning). In fact, it is likely that a verse such as His saying—May He be exalted!—*And when the wild beasts are gathered up* (81:6) is meant to refer to the "Gathering" of that group of individual mortal men

to the context of all Being, the "greater Rising" or "Return" of all existents to their common noetic Ground; second, a tentative consideration of the status of psychic being in animals and lower life forms; and third, a brief concluding reference to the comprehensive "political" dimension of man's being (as both *bashar* and *insān*: cf. the Introduction, VI-B), at the intersection of cosmos and psyche, pointing to the intention that unites the differing subjects, styles of writing, and levels of meaning in this book.

297 This paragraph recalls the universal ontological context of all particular being, as outlined in Part I above: the "returning" in question here (cf. the title of Part II) is an aspect of the transubstantiation (*ḥaraka jawharīya*) of all beings, that is, their inner relation to the noetic Ground of all divine Self-manifestation. But more particularly (cf. n. 301 below), it should by this time recall the various dimensions of human participation in the realization of that process.

whose souls are of the same sort as the spirits of wild beasts, so that they are resurrected as wild beasts, rather than as true human beings.[298]

(As for the resurrection of the souls of individual animals), what can be established by a conjectural sort of proof is that we ought to distinguish among them (according to the level of development of the soul). Thus, every animal that has a soul capable of imagination and memory, above the level of mere sensation, would have a survival after (bodily) death and be gathered into one of the intermediate worlds; it would not be destroyed and kept from these passages (through the intermediate, psychic world), because the providential Ordering of things would surely not keep anything from moving toward its (natural) perfection.

As for the "Gathering" of the souls (of lower animals) possessing sensation, but without imagination or recollection, this would be like the "Gathering" of all the (lower, nonintellective) powers of the soul and their Return to their (archetypal noetic) Source which is the "Lord of their species," as the master of the philosophers ("Aristotle"—actually Plotinus) has mentioned in his book *Fī Ma'rifat al-Rubūbīya* (the *Theology of "Aristotle"*).[299] The "Gathering"

[298] Cf. the interpretation of this same verse (81:6) in II-A, §10, and the similar interpretation of the "Gathering" (in reference to men's different habitual psychic dispositions) in II-C, §3 above. It might be noted that the philosophic question raised in this section has important practical ethical implications for man's relations to animals and other natural beings—problems that do not so readily arise where human nature is conceived as fundamentally different (in terms of a unique "intellective" capacity, as in Avicenna, for instance) from the being of lower animals.

[299] Cf. the earlier discussion of this work, and Sadra's awareness of its non-Aristotelean provenance, in II-A, §9 (n. 98) above. The Arabic title given here ("Concerning Knowledge of the Divinity") translates the Greek *theologia*; the work was also commonly known by the Arabic transliteration of that term, *Uthūlūjīyā*. The passage alluded to here (translated in n. 300 below) clearly concerns the ontic dependence of particular material existents on their Form or noetic archetype—what Sadra here calls the "Lord of their species" (*rabb al-naw'*), a term adopted from Suhrawardi. In this view, the lower animals and plants apparently do not participate individually in the autonomous psychic domain of being, since their "sensations" do not seem to involve the more complex separate representations that are a distinctive feature of the psychic world as known in *our* ordinary experience. This latter point is a serious qualification that probably accounts for Sadra's characterization of this whole argument as at best "conjectural" (*ḥadsī*).

of vegetal souls, too, is like that (of lower animals)—for example, when trees are cut down or dry up, as was mentioned by one of the true knowers (Plotinus).[300]

And the "Gathering" of the mass of unthinking followers and adherents (of a religion) to the lofty ranks of the Imams and truly knowledgeable authorities likewise resembles the gathering of the (lower) powers of the soul into the rational ones.[301] This is like

300 The "true knower" (*al-'ārif*) mentioned here is none other than the author of the passage from the *Theology* (that is, Plotinus/Porphyry) just mentioned (at n. 299). The use of this epithet is another significant indication that Sadra did not confuse this author with the author of the standard Aristotelean corpus (whom he criticized on a number of points for failing to grasp the special insights of the *'urafā'*). The actual passage (taken from the *Theology*, Badawī ed., p. 138, corresponding to *Enneads* V, 2, ii) is given as follows in the *Asfār* (IX, 255-256):

> If someone should say: "If the power of the soul separates from the tree after its roots are cut off, then where does that power or that soul go?," we would answer: "It goes to the place from which it never separated, which is the world of the Intellect. And similarly, if the brute part [of a plant or animal] should become corrupted [and die], then the soul which is in it goes on and comes to the world of the Intellect. It only comes to that world because that world is the place of the soul, which is the Intellect; the Intellect is in no place, so the soul is not in any place either. And if it is not in a place, then necessarily it is both above and below and in the Whole, without becoming divided or split into parts with the divisions of the Whole. So the soul is in every place and in no place."

301 This concluding paragraph marks a third stage in the development of this book (and all of Sadra's systematic works: cf. the Introduction, IV-B and C) and at least potentially, in the reader's understanding and realization of its intentions. The argument has moved from the structure of Being and the cosmos (Part I), to the structure of the soul (Parts II-A and II-B) and its place within the larger cosmic Whole or Being (Part II-C). The recognition of that ultimate context of soul's self-realization points to a field of action and the manifestation of Being that inevitably transcends any narrowly conceived "personal" transformation—a field extending through all the forms of community, including the largest civilizational wholes (those "founded" by the prophetic Lawgivers), to the community of mankind and all sentient beings. In that context, as Sadra very pointedly emphasizes in his Concluding Testament, such terms as the "leaders" (or "Imams"), "knowledgeable authorities" (*mujtahidūn*), and unthinking "followers" (*muqallidūn*) within a given historical community are exceedingly ambiguous; cf. n. 279 above. The tension between the "Realities," or potential actualizations of these terms, and the particular prevailing conceptions of their meaning, he indicates, is something that each reader must resolve in his own way, in his own historical and personal situation.

(what is indicated) in His saying—May He be exalted!—*And Solomon's armies were gathered up for him, the jinn and men and birds, all of them drawn up in order* (27:19), and in such verses as His saying: *And the birds are gathered up, each of them returning unto Him* (38:19).

These are the words of His humble servant: I seek the protection of God, my Lord, the Sublime, in all of my words and actions and beliefs and writings, against anything that might offend against proper adherence to that Law which was brought to us by the Chief of (God's) Messengers and the Seal of the Prophets—May the most excellent blessings of all worshipers be with him and his Family!—and against anything that might indicate some flagging in my resolution and faith or some weakness in my clinging to the *firm Cable* (3:103). For I know with absolute certainty that it is not possible for any to worship God as is His right and due, except through the intermediary of him who possesses the Greatest Name, who is the Perfect Man, the Consummate one, God's Viceroy in the Loftiest Viceregency, in the (material) world of Power and in the (psychic and noetic) worlds of the lower and higher Kingdom, in *the first state of being* and *the next* (56:62; 53:47).[302]

Now I charge you, those of you who are regarding these pages, that you consider them with the eye of manly virtue and most serious concern! And [286] I beseech you, by God and His Kingdom and all His Messengers, that you leave behind the custom of lowly souls, those that are habituated to whatever is the common opinion

302 All of the epithets applied to Muhammad in this last sentence, many of them Koranic terms taken from Ibn Arabi's symbolic lexicon, refer to the noetic dimension of Being that is understood throughout Sadra's work as the inner "Reality of Muhammad" (*al-ḥaqīqa al-muḥammadīya*, the "Lamp-niche for Prophecy," etc.) and of all the other prophets and imams in the different religious communities, and the "true knowers" or fully realized human beings. Hence the mediation (*tawassuṭ*) referred to here is simply another expression for the realization of that enlightened transcendent mode of being and consciousness, however it may be symbolically apprehended and expressed.

The "first state of being" and "the next" translate *al-nash'a al-ūlā* and *al-nash'a al-ukhrā*, expressions that Sadra has frequently used to refer to the material and immaterial "modalities of being," respectively. The corresponding opposition of the "world of Power" or "Kingship" (*'ālam al-mulk*) and the "world of the Kingdom" (*'ālam al-malakūt*: cf. n. 8) was also a long-standing Sufi usage. In that context the "lower" and "higher" Kingdom (*al-malakūt al-asfal/al-a'lā*) distinguish the psychic and noetic dimensions of being that together make up the "other world" (*al-ākhira*).

among the multitude, who are averse to anything they have not heard from their fathers and their elders, even if it should be demonstrated by the most incontrovertible proof! Do not be among those who give absolutely blind assent (to those popular opinions) without any proof, those whom God has criticized at numerous places in the Koran, such as His saying: *And among men there are those who vainly dispute concerning God, having neither Knowledge nor right Guidance nor an illuminating Book. And when it is said to them, "Follow what God has sent down!" they say: "No! We shall rather follow what we found our fathers doing"* [*—Even if the Devil were calling them into the torment of Hell!*] (31:20-21; 22:8).

So be most careful that you do not restrict the intentions of the divine Law and the realities of the truly monotheist Religion simply to what you have heard from your teachers and professors since the time of your first formal profession of belief.[303] For (if you do that), you will forever remain frozen in place there at the very threshold of your door and your (true spiritual) station, instead of *emigrating toward your Lord* (29:26). No, rather you must follow the Religion of our true (that is, spiritual) father Abraham, being *a true monotheist and surrendered* [to God] (3:67), (taking him as your example) where he said to his metaphorical (that is, bodily) father:[304] *"O my father, do not worship Satan!"* (19:44), and *"I am*

[303] For Sadra's basic distinction between the outward profession of "submission" (*islām*) to the external conventions of religion (or belief in general), and the level of enlightened "true faith" (*īmān*), which is the noetic realization of the true "intentions" (*maqāṣid*) of the prophetic Lawgivers, see II-C, §9, nn. 228-236, and the Introduction, V-A and VI-B.

The terms translated as "Law" (*al-sharī'a*) and "Religion" (*al-milla*) here had particular political connotations for Islamic philosophers, referring to the specific political and sociocultural "communities" (*al-milal*) in which all men live, and to the ultimate constitutive principles of those communities (the *sharā'i'*, or *nomoi*), only a fragment of which are ordinarily codified at the level of formal "laws." Sadra's qualification of this Law as "divine" and this religious community as "truly monotheist" (*ḥanīfa*, the same epithet applied to Abraham below), as well as his stress on the "intentions" of the Law and the "realities" (*al-ḥaqā'iq*: cf. n. 304 and Part I, §§6-11) of true Religion, all point to the ongoing tensions between the existing historical situation and the perspective that his writings suggest (cf. the Introduction, II, III-A and B, and VI-B).

[304] Here Sadra uses a traditional pair of rhetorical terms, *ḥaqīqī* (true, real) and *majāzī* (the "metaphorical" or extended meaning), in a way that underlines his distinctly Platonic ontology and, more specifically, his understanding of the

going to my Lord; He will guide me aright" (37:99). So likewise, you too must *go to your Lord* and travel from the threshold of your door, *from the house* of your veiled condition, *emigrating toward God and His Messenger* (4:100), so that you may see among the Signs of the (divine) Sovereignty and the wonders of the (heavenly) Kingdom "what no eye has seen and no ear has heard."[305] And *if death should overtake* you on this journey, then your *reward is incumbent on God,* in accordance with His saying—May He be exalted!—*Whoever leaves his home, emigrating toward God and His Messenger, and then is overtaken by death, his reward is incumbent on God* (4:100).

Nor should you be concerned if you are traveling in opposition to the multitude. For the multitude have stopped in their resting-places, while the traveler (on the Way) is moving on from his place.[306] And how can there be any agreement between the seden-

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noetic "Reality" (*ḥaqīqa*) of all the prophets and imams. This usage was also common in Sufi writings, especially as applied to "true," divine Love (*'ishq*, corresponding to the universal meaning of *raḥma,* divine "Compassion" or "Mercy," in this work) and its "metaphorical" manifestations in human experience. "Religion" here again translates *milla,* the religiopolitical community: cf. n. 303 above.

305 This is part of a famous divine saying (*ḥadīth qudsī*) given in Wensinck, *Concordance,* II, 48 and Furūzānfar, *Aḥādīth-i Mathnawī,* pp. 93-94: "God—may He be exalted!—said: 'I have prepared for my servants who do good what no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and what has not occurred to the heart of mortal man [*bashar*].'" Cf. the nearly identical passage in *I Corinthians* 2:9, also quoted by Sufi writers, and further references in W. Graham, *Divine Word,* pp. 117-119.

In this sentence the Koranic term "Signs" (*āyāt*: cf. the related usage in the title of Part I) refers to all phenomena perceived in relation to their noetic divine Source, that is, as theophanies (*tajalliyāt*). The divine "Sovereignty" or "Omnipotence" (*al-jabarūt*) was a common term in Ibn Arabi and his school for the domain of noetic Being (therefore equivalent to the "higher Kingdom," *al-malakūt al-a'lā,* at n. 302 above), while in this case the angelic "Kingdom" (*al-malakūt*) refers more narrowly to the psychic domain of manifestation (that is, the "lower Kingdom").

306 "Multitude," throughout this last section, translates *al-jumhūr,* roughly equivalent to the philosophic meanings of the Greek *hoi polloi.* There is an untranslatable play on words here between the common meaning of *manzil* as "house" or "resting-place" and the Sufi reference to the inward "stages" of the "traveler" (*al-musāfir,* corresponding to the *sālik* of the Prologue, n. 7) on the spiritual Path (*al-ṭarīqa*). Still another aspect of this travel imagery, developed later in this section (cf. n. 313), is the analogy of this spiritual "pilgrimage" to

tary man and the one who is moving, between the one who sets out on the journey and the one who stays behind?! Rather, as it was said by your Imam and ours, The Commander of the Faithful (Ali) —May the blessings of *the Lord of the Worlds* (1:2) be on him and his Brethren and Family!—"Do not [try to] know the Truth by men [that is, according to their opinions and reputations]. Rather, [first] *know* the Truth; then through It you will know and recognize Its people."

Know that to attain the true inner divine knowledge one must follow a *proof* or "unveiling" by immediate vision, just as He—May He be exalted!—said: *Say: "Bring your proof, if you are among those who speak truthfully!"* (2:111); and He—May He be exalted! —said: *Whoever calls upon another god together with God has no proof for that* (23:117). This *proof* is a Light that God casts on the Heart of the man of true faith, a Light that illuminates his inner vision so that he "sees things as they really are," as it was stated in the prayer of the Prophet—May God's blessings and peace be with him!—for himself and the elect among his community and his close disciples: "O my God, cause us to see things as they really are!"[307]

Know, too, that those questions concerning which the commonality of the philosophers[308] have disagreed with the prophets—May

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the ritual of the Hajj, which Sadra himself is reported to have accomplished some seven times.

307 For this famous *ḥadīth*, see Furūzānfar, *Aḥādīth-i Mathnawī*, p. 35. "Close disciples" here translates the key term *awliyā'* (sing. *walī*: cf. Prologue, nn. 4, 6); for some of the ambiguities of its meaning, see n. 276 and the Introduction, III-A and VI-B.

Sadra's indication in this paragraph of the identity, in this context, of "proof" (*al-burhān*: used elsewhere in the traditional philosophic sense of formal logical demonstration) and the actual realization of transcendence is highly significant; cf. related discussions in the Introduction, II and V-A. For the more technical meaning of the expressions "true inner knowledge," "unveiling," "inner vision," "Heart," "true faith," and "Light" as references to aspects of this enlightening awareness of the noetic reality of Being, see the many illustrations above.

308 *Jumhūr al-falāsifa*: the reference is to Sadra's common distinction between the Illuminationist or Platonic "sages" (*ḥukamā'*) and realized "knowers" (*'urafā'*), whose wisdom is based in the same enlightened experience as the perspective of the prophets (e.g., at II-A, §§9 and 11, n. 105; and at n. 300 above), and the more common "official" or "formalist wisdom" (*al-ḥikma al-rasmīya*: cf. n. 106) characteristic of the Avicennan Peripatetic tradition widely taught in the

God bless them!—are not matters that can easily be grasped and attained; nor can they be [287] acquired by rejecting our rational, logical intellects, with their (intrinsic) measures and their contemplative activities of learning and investigating. If this were so, then there would never have been any disagreement (with the prophets) concerning these questions on the part of those intelligent men who were busy all their lives using the tool of thought and reflection to acquire a (true) conception of things; those (philosophers) would never have fallen into error in these questions and there would have been no need for the sending of the prophets (if these metaphysical realities were so easy to grasp). So it should be known that these questions can only be comprehended by taking over Lights from the Lamp-niche of Prophecy, and by earnestly seeking Them. For these are the Secrets which are the true inner meaning of Discipleship and Sainthood.[309]

Therefore you must completely free the Heart (from any attachments to the body) and totally purify the innermost self. You must be rigorously detached from created being, and (devote yourself to) repeated intimate communion with the Truly Real, in spiritual retreat. And you must shun the carnal desires, the various forms of the will to dominate, and the other animal ends (which follow from our bodily condition), by means of a pure and untroubled inner intention and sincere faith.[310] In this way your action will

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schools at that time. See the discussion of this distinction in the Introduction, III-B and C.

Sadra's irenic defense of the methods and intentions of the Avicennan philosophers here—against the many forms of theological and gnostic irrationalism threatening philosophy at all times—is a characteristic feature of his writings. He is always careful to stress that his criticisms of certain positions of the Avicennans (e.g., at II-A, §1 above) have to do with certain essential *incompletions* in their experiential premises and primary concerns, but not at all with the intended universality of their perspective and their rational methods.

309 "Discipleship and Sainthood" here translates *al-walāya*: for the ambiguities of this key term, referring at once to the "imams" (of whatever age) and to all those truly "close to God," see nn. 6 and 376 and other references above. For other allusions to the "Lamp-niche of Prophecy," see nn. 6, 74, 105, etc.; for the Sufi term "secret" (*sirr*), cf. nn. 80-81. Again, all of these terms, as the central imagery of "Light" makes clear, refer to the noetic dimension of Being realized by the "true knowers."

310 Most of the terms in this paragraph are taken from the technical vocabulary of Sufism. Such terms as *tajrīd* ("detachment" and inner "purification"), *qalb* (the "Heart," or locus of man's noetic Self), *sirr* ("secret" or "innermost

itself become your reward, and your knowledge will be precisely the same as your attaining the Goal of your aspiration, so that when *the dark covering is removed* (50:22) and the veil is lifted (from your heart and inner vision), you will be standing in the Presence of the Lord of Lords—just as you already were in your *innermost heart* (2:269; etc.).[311]

For tomorrow you will only be joined with what you have known. And on the Day of the Rising you will only be gathered up to what you have loved—to such a degree that, as it is related in the Prophetic tradition, "Even if someone should love a stone, he will be gathered up together with it!"[312] So take care that you do not love what you can never attain, and that you do not (believe that you) know what has no reality in the other world, lest you perish consumed in the Fire *of the Blaze* (3:181; etc.) or *be hurled to a Place far away* (22:31). For you have already learned that no one is "gathered up" to anything but his (own soul) and that pleasure or pain comes only from what is there.

Therefore you must correct your soul, clarify your inner intention, rectify your belief, and illuminate your heart for those who inquire. And you must *purify* your *house for those who go round and those who seclude themselves* (2:125), *turn your face in the direction of* (2:144) the Kaaba of your Goal, and aim your way toward your Lord, the Master of Goodness and Bounty. For This is the End of the journey and of the traveling to the world of Light. And This is the ultimate Outcome of that trade which will never be unprofitable: giving up the articles of this insubstantial aspect (of the material world) in exchange for recompense from the Everlasting. *What is with God is better for the truly pious* (3:198).

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setlf"), and *nīya* ("inner intention") have been used in many earlier chapters. "Spiritual retreat" (*khalwa*) refers to one of the more common Sufi practices, as well as having the broad sense of inner nonattachment to the world.

311 "Innermost heart" here translates *lubb* (plural *albāb*), which in this case is close in meaning to the more common terms *sirr* and *qalb* (cf. n. 309 and many other places above); all of these expressions refer to the same noetic dimension of man's being, the transcendent Self or Intellect. The Koran several times refers to the special insight of the *ūlū al-albāb*, "those possessing *lubb*," in contexts that Sufis took to refer to the enlightened "knowers"—and Shiites, to the Imams—who were aware of the inner meaning of the revelation. (Cf. the closely related Koranic expression, "those deeply grounded in knowledge," at I, §5 and II-C, §4, n. 184.)

312 This tradition has already been discussed at II-C, §2 (n. 172).

So this is the arrival at the Kaaba of the ultimate Goal and the encounter with the One Who is worshiped. But it is only possible by traveling rapidly the Way of knowledge, on the feet of thought and inquiry, and not simply by means of bodily movements, whose only outcome is to add to the troubles of the Journey, without helping to acquire any provisions or to gather any goods for the Return.[313] This is why (the Prophet)—May God's blessing and peace be with him!—said: "An hour's reflection is better than seventy years of [purely formal] worship."[314] And he said to the best of his people and the Gate of the City of his knowledge: "O Ali! Since mankind seek to come near to their Creator through all kinds of piety, bring yourself close to Him through all kinds [of activities] of the Intellect, so that you may arrive There before all of them."

From this (saying) you may surmise that the aim of [288] the bodily acts of worship and particular religious prescriptions, such as performing the ritual prayer, fasting, and others, is only (to be attained) through the purification of the heart and the refinement of the innermost self, by sincere inner purpose in (performing) them and by inward thought—inasmuch as they are really service of the Truly Real Object of Worship and drawing near to the Absolute God, not the motions of the limbs and the agitation of the tongue! God—May He be exalted!—said: *True piety is not that you turn your faces toward the East and the West. Rather, the truly pious man is he who has true faith in God and the Last Day . . .* (2:177).[315]

313 *Al-ma'ād*: the philosophic complexities of this expression should be apparent by now; cf. the Introduction, VI. The many references to trading and goods in this section, as part of the imagery of the pilgrimage, refer to the common practice of those on the Hajj buying or bartering for rarer goods from more distant lands to help defray the costs of their long journey to Mecca.

314 In this tradition, especially popular among the Sufis, the word translated here as "reflection" (*tafakkur*) was commonly understood as equivalent to the Koranic "recollection" (*tadhakkur*), understood both broadly, in the sense of recovering man's primordial state of being, and as a more specific reference to the widespread contemplative practice of *dhikr*, repeated invocation of a divine name or other meditative formula; cf. n. 248 above. The following sentence is the last of many allusions in this work to the famous tradition concerning Ali as the "Gate" to the Prophet's inner knowledge, which was quoted at n. 277 above.

315 For Sadra's understanding of "true faith" (*īmān*) as the realized condition of transcendence, see II-C, §9 (nn. 228-236) and many other references above. The practical implications of that state of being, or "true piety" (*al-birr*), are

Finally, the worst of all hindrances to true religion and the greatest obstacle on the path of those journeying toward God is that they may respond to the call of those scholars who are "learned" (only) in evil, and that they may follow the misleading opinions and misguided writings of such men.[316] For the deception of those (traveling in the Way of God) by these so-called "learned men" and legal scholars and their so-called "wisdom" is the same as deluding *the thirsty man with a mirage* (24:39), and thereby turning him away from the Fountain of the Waters of Life. (This is) just as He—May He be exalted!—said: *And if you were to obey most of those who are on the earth, they would lead you far astray from the Path of God. For they follow nothing but their own conjecture, and they are only guessing* (6:116). [*Indeed most of them follow nothing but conjecture,*] *And conjecture is no substitute at all for the Truth!* (10:36).

May God protect us and our brethren who have true faith against the evil of (all such) devils and those who lead astray![317] And may

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also clearly indicated in the remainder of this verse, which Sadra explicitly alludes to here with the mention *al-āya* . . . ("and the rest of the verse"): . . . *and the angels and the Book and the prophets; and he who gives his wealth, for the love of Him, to those close to him, orphans, the poor, travelers, those who ask, and in setting slaves free; who observe the ritual prayer and give the alms-tax; who fulfill their covenant when they have made one; who are patient in suffering and distress and the time of injury: Those are the ones who have been sincere, and those are the godfearing ones.*

316 "Those scholars who are 'learned' (only) in evil" translates the more concise and pregnant Arabic expression *'ulamā' al-sū'*. The term *'ulamā'* commonly referred specifically to the class of religious scholars trained in the public application of the details of the Law and religious tradition (and the auxiliary sciences and theoretical rationales, such as kalam): cf. Sadra's earlier references (beginning with the Prologue, n. 5) to the problematic opposition of *'ilm* and *ma'rifa* (immediate "inner knowing"); that problem is dealt with in almost all chapters of the Introduction. Sadra's connection of this group with certain "legal scholars" (the *fuqahā'*) is a further confirmation of this general meaning. Traditionally, this was the Shiite group that, at least in the majority of its less sophisticated representatives, most strongly attacked both philosophy and Sufism and had argued for the separation of prophetic revelation from philosophic understanding—the sort of attitude Sadra had just condemned at n. 308 above. For the more immediate historical background of this dispute, see the Introduction, all of Chapter III (especially Sections A and F).

317 The "devils" mentioned here and in the Prologue (at n. 8) are to be understood in light of Sadra's characterization of "Satanic" souls (at II-A, §10) as those dominated by "compounded ignorance" (*jahl murakkab*: cf. also n. 206 on the "two states of ignorance")—that is, the perversion of man's noetic nature,

He illumine our hearts with the Lights of wisdom and certainty, by the right of Muhammad and his immaculate Family—May God's peace be with them all!

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which consists in the failure to recognize at once the ultimate relativity and true Ground of all forms of belief. "Ignorance," in this sense, is not necessarily false belief (since it only incidentally concerns particular "objects" of knowledge), but rather the inner condition of unexamined "opinion" (*i'tiqād*: *doxa*) as a state of being characterized by the fundamental illusions of "attachment" (to a particular body) and "separation" from all other beings. In contrast, the "certainty" (*al-yaqīn*) of the true "knower" (the *'ārif*, not the *'ālim*) refers to a condition of inner openness to the fullness of being that may be manifested in apparent foolishness or "ignorance": the parallel to Socrates' paradoxic "wisdom" is entirely appropriate. Thus the temptation to attach this epithet to a particular historical group in Sadra's time—although that was no doubt part of his intention (cf. n. 316)—should not be allowed to obscure the more universal dimensions of its meaning.

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